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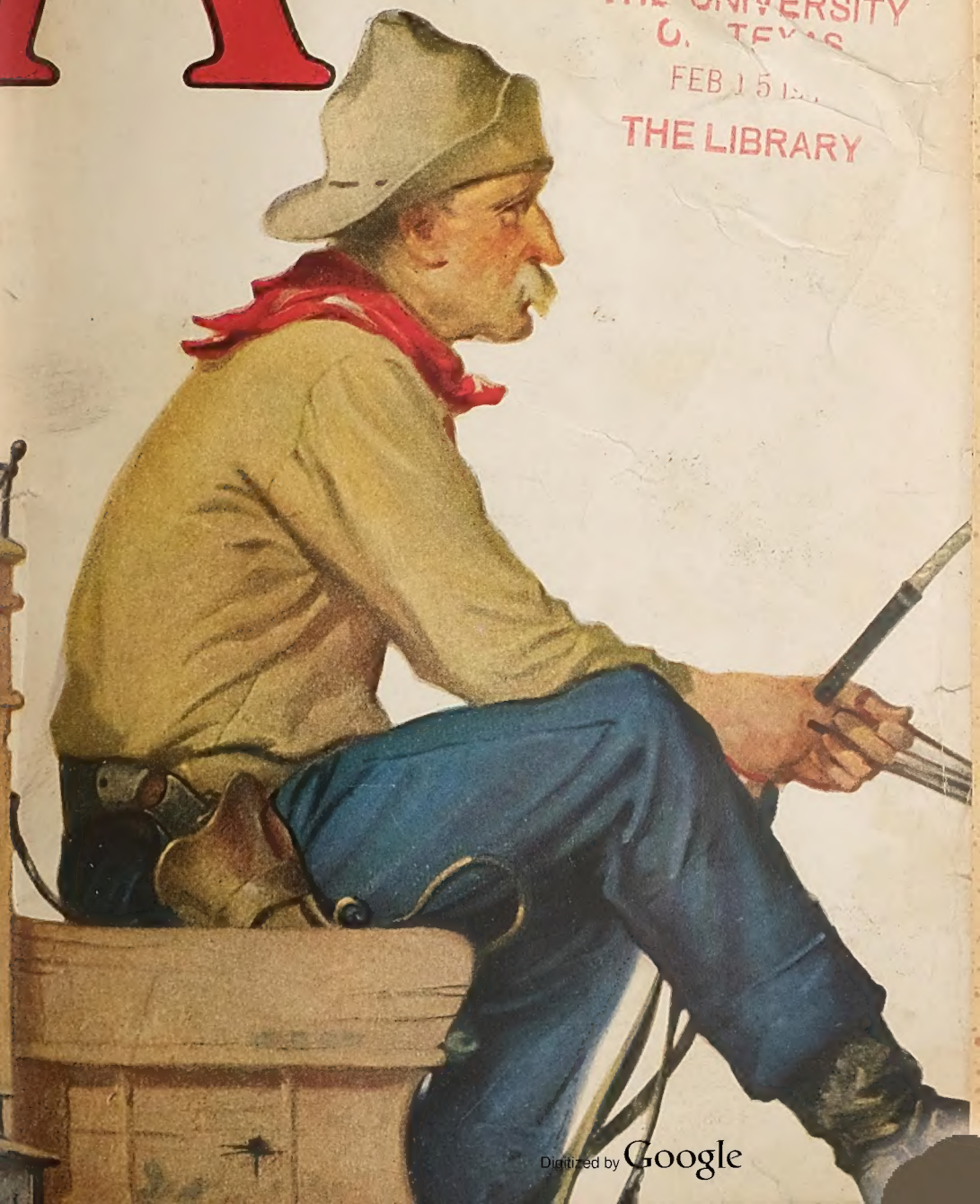

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March 3 1918 Vol. 16 No. 5

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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Mid-March Adventure

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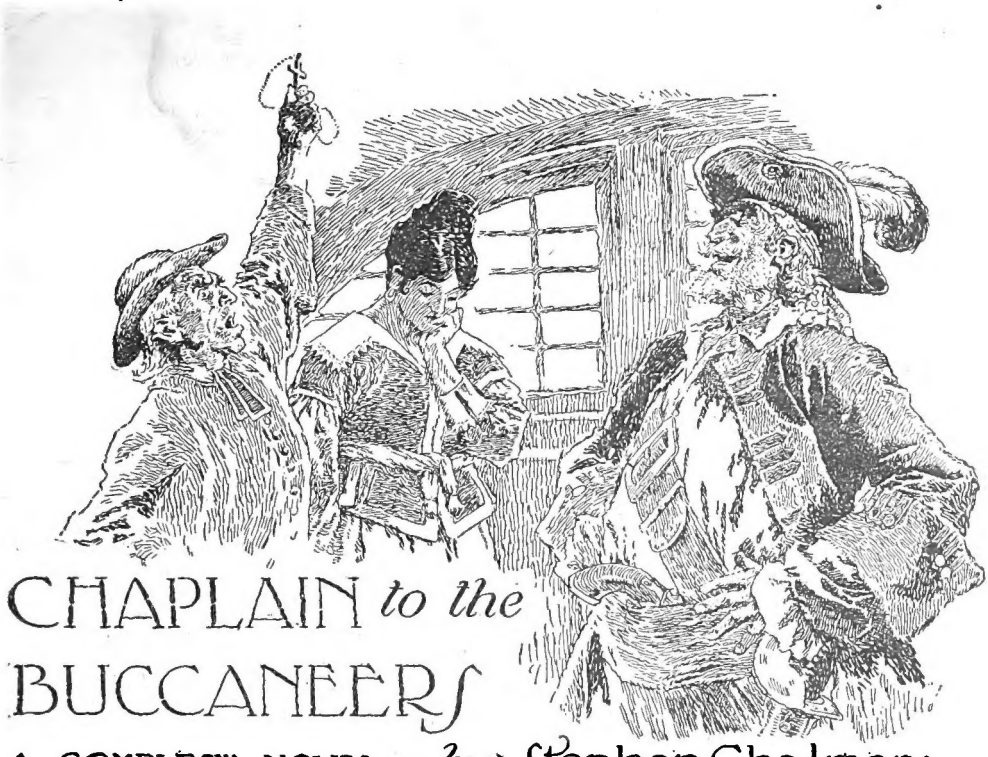

CHAPLAIN *to the* BUCCANEERS

A COMPLETE NOVEL ~ *by* Stephen Chalmers

Author of "The Admiral of the Line."

CHAPTER I

As manly a preacher as never said prayer
When flails of the tempest were thrashing the air;
A priest whose religion was, "Play the game fair!"
Was the wandering Père Labat.
—*Ballads of the Buccaneers.*

LOS SANTOS, a scattering of wattled huts around a chapel and the *alcalde's* house, had a population that day greatly in excess of its accommodations, for word had gone forth to every corner of the Isle of Los Santos that Père Labat was come again.

That was enough. When the chapel bell rang out over the village, a tocsin call to the faithful, its mellow note was heard miles away in the tobacco patches, the yam fields and the sugar brakes. Then the human tongue took up the office of the bells and the word was carried through the bush to isolated huts buried in clumps of cassava, hibiscus and coffee bushes, to the shelters of the turtle-hunters in the coves of the north side and even out to the fishing dug-outs beyond the reefs. Père Labat was come again.

At the word the Caribs paddled to the white beaches, the turtle-hunters turned their captives into the confined pools, the Spanish peons dropped their hoes; everybody on the little island—and they were a curious mingling of French, English Quakers, Portuguese, Africans and aboriginal Caribs—abandoned his employ or his leisure, gathered together his family, if he had one, donned holiday attire and headed through the jungle trails for the village of Los Santos on the south side of the Isle of Los Santos. For Père Labat was come.

He came on an average once a year, although, if fortune in the shape of a vessel and a breeze favored, he might come twice. None could foretell his arrival until the bell of the chapel sounded the good news. Then followed days of religious festival; festival in every sense, and religious too, for Père Labat believed that his children should be happy and joyful in their observances.

"Who laughs from the heart is never lost to salvation," was the way the little priest put it.

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He had arrived in the usual unexpected manner and by the usual unexpected means. From the island of Dominica, the weather being calm, he had crossed the strait in an Indian canoe manned by six paddlers who chanted "The Song of Himairo and Uawa" the whole way, keeping time with their flashing blades, while Père Labat, in his rusty black robe and his shovel hat, dozed in the stern.

He had been received with open arms on the beach of Los Santos by the *alcalde*, Señor Ramirez, and a motley of villagers. He stepped from the canoe with his frock uplifted clear of the ripples, revealing skinny ankles in black hose rising out of sharp-toed shoes ornamented by silver buckles. His face was thin and brown and like old parchment, save that it was full of kindly lines that wrinkled into smiles as he blessed everybody collectively. He promptly began to inquire about the crops.

"All goes well, *Padre*," said Señor Ramirez on behalf of the Isle of Los Santos. "The cassava has done well and the yams, planted at the full of the moon, have done even better. The rats are a little troublesome in the cane, Père Labat, but the coffee bloom survived the rains excellently. On the whole, God is good to us, *Padre*."

"And the crop of souls?" said Père Labat. "What has failed and what flourished?"

"Ah, *Padre*," said Ramirez. "It was time you came. We have need of you. There are seventeen new babies for baptism, fourteen of our young people who would be confirmed, five pairs of happy lovers who seek the church's blessing, and we all welcome our confessor."

"Good!" said Père Labat, his face wreathed in smiles. But the mobile countenance as quickly changed to dolor. "And how many masses?"

"Five, *Padre*," said the *alcalde*, bowing his head.

"Five? Well, that might be worse. They shall rest in peace. Ring the bell, good señor, and—you promised me a sucking-pig, stuffed with *akees* and gratered cashew-nuts. And you were ever a fair hand at mixing the calibogus. To your house, good Ramirez! Replenish the inner man and the inner spirit wondrously lifts."

Thus Père Labat came again to Los Santos and was lodged in the house of Señor Ramirez, the *alcalde*, while the villagers took charge of the Indian paddlers who, being well fed, returned to the greater island of Dominica next day.

Nine months had passed since the *padre's* last visit. During that time he had wandered over the islands that were his parish, from Jamaica in the west to Trinidad in the east and the myriad isles and islets between. From each to each he had passed by whatever craft offered, sometimes a canoe, again a fishing boat, once or twice by a majestic king's frigate and not once or twice by a buccaneer vessel.

For Père Labat feared nothing that walked on two legs, and by all that walked on two legs was he respected. To the high he was a scholar; to the brave he was fearless; to the lowly he was an humble worker of God; and to the palace of governors and the huts of Indians, to the forecastles of ships and to the planters' *casas* in the jungle clearings, he brought always something that did whatever good was required.

This was Père Labat, the little French priest, whose piety, fearlessness, humor, learning, human sympathy and tolerance had made him beloved all over the Isles of the Windward and Lee, as honored in the places of the high as he was welcome and beloved in the hovels of the native poor. And ever in his wanderings by sea and land, in jungles and in cities of new world wickedness, he set down a record of observations that were one day to delight far-off France and, for a time, the civilized world that has now all but forgotten him.

The little French priest—little indeed in stature; a mere wisp of a man, but of steel that one may bend but not break. He had an eye like a hawk's, a nose that was aquiline, a thin, wide mouth that suggested an iron will; but, despite, those stern features were betrayed by the kindly lines of his eye-corners, the humorous pucker of his mouth-corners and a curious occasional twitching of his brows and nostrils when the pathos or comedy of humanity came under his quick perception. It was Colonel Vernon, of his Majesty's forces at Port Royal, who said of him—

"That little priest looks like a dried snapper, but there's a goodly amount of nourishment in that."

And it was Sir Thomas Modyford, a Governor of Jamaica, who later told a story at Whitehall that made the Merry Monarch of England laugh till he cried, about this same little Père Labat. It was how Labat

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sought to console a pirate who was about to be hanged at Gallows Point.

"Be of good cheer, my son," said Père Labat. "Your neck is short and it won't last long!"

And they do say that the buccaneer went up into the chains chuckling and he was still chuckling when the rope cut his amusement short.

At Los Santos that day Père Labat had his sucking-pig, served whole as a savory roast by Señor Ramirez' peons, and the rarest vegetables and fruits of the tropic isle were also brought to the table, together with the *alcalde's* famous mixture of calibogus—the water of young coconuts and white rum. The little priest ate a prodigious meal but drank sparingly of the calibogus. It was not so much the example of temperance, he averred, but that the thirst of whetted employ had the more delicate enjoyment.

That afternoon and the ensuing night he rested, while the Indians and the European settlers, dressed in their holiday colors, came into the village of Los Santos to be in time for the first mass they had heard in nine months. The lovers came hand in hand, whispering happily, for the longed-for day had suddenly dawned. The mothers sat on the backs of burros and suckled their babes. The maidens walked demurely, their heads draped in the white lace-bark they used for confirmation veils, while the young men tried hard not to think of the feasting and dancing that would come after the weddings.

Soon after sunrise Señor Ramirez, with his own hands, pulled the bell-rope in the chapel. The chapel door was swung open, but the group of over two hundred did not enter until Père Labat came from the *alcalde's* house, walked through a lane between rows of bowed heads, scattering blessings as he went into the holy edifice.

Then he conducted the first service; and for two days thereafter he was the busy little priest. He received seventeen new babies into the church, smiling happily as he sprinkled them with holy water, smiling broadly when they resented it, chuckling—it seemed—when the little wail stopped short as the mother's arms again received the child. He gravely married five couples—one pair at a time, so there should be no doubt about the binding—and laid his hands upon the bowed heads of fourteen young people to whom he was as good as any bishop.

Then he said mass after mass for the souls of five departed since his last visit. Between times he visited the sick, sought out the backsliders, had a friendly argument with a Quaker or two, and sat in judgment beside Señor Ramirez over cases that involved such things as the ownership of a goat or the depredations of a donkey in another man's yam-ground.

Then for two nights the village of Los Santos rang with the ensuing festivities, held in the balmy tropic moonlight. Señor Ramirez and Père Labat occupied chairs; the rest sat on the ground when they were not dancing or love-making in the coconut grove by the beach. Whole pigs were roasted at a bonfire on the coral sand; baked breadfruit, black as cannonballs, were speared from the red embers; hot plantains were buttered; *afu* yams were passed around, and for drink and sweets they had the brisk beverage of young coconuts, home-brewed wines, calibogus, guavas, cashews, star-apples, naseberries and all the fruits of the fair isle.

In the middle of the second night, under a full moon, the festivities came to an end. The people from the jungle gathered in groups and set off for home, the donkeys festooned with mothers and sleepy youngsters over whom the men held umbrellas of palm leaves, for they were superstitious of travel under the moon's rays. Happiness returned to the jungle huts with many a newly married pair, also the promise of happiness with those who, moved by example, would provide material for the good *padre's* offices when Père Labat came again.

"AND now," said Père Labat next morning. "I have done a good work, Señor *Alcalde*. It will be as God wills, but I have a mind to see some vessel will carry me to Port Royal; I care not what it be, or saint or sinner commanding, but the latter for preference."

"And why, good Father?"

"Why? Mark ye, good Ramirez, if it be a saint it will be my pleasure, but if a sinner in need of shriving it may be my duty for his good. God send me a rascal, for I am a priest!"

It was as if Heaven had foreseen his prayer, for at that moment there arose an outcry in the one street of Los Santos.

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"Señor! *Padre!*" cried some one outside the open window, while other voices took up the cry of alarm.

Ramirez and Père Labat hastened outside and were met by a number of islanders while others appeared from the thatched huts, hurrying toward the *alcalde's* house.

"What is it, good Veira?" Père Labat demanded of a young Portuguese who had cried through the window.

"A buccaneer, *Padre*—in the offing! It is *El Sangre*, señores—the 'Red Daniel!'"

"Ha! God is good!" said Père Labat to the amazement of all but the *alcalde*. "Be of good cheer, my children. No harm will come to Santos while Père Labat is among you."

They believed him, but were anxious nevertheless. The *padre* would not always be here and Red Daniel, the notorious freebooter, had paid Santos a visit before. He had done them no injury, but that was only because they had yielded to his demands, which involved fresh fruits, fresh water and a considerable number of goats, hogs and fowls, for which he made no return save threats if the provisions were not forthcoming a little more speedily.

"They are hove to and putting off in a boat, señores!" cried Veira. "They must not land!"

"They must not land!" echoed the growing crowd, and then there was a rush back to the huts for such scanty and ancient arms as the island possessed.

The little priest was about to dissuade them, but changed his mind. He knew the buccaneers well. Particularly he knew *El Sangre*, or Red Daniel, as the English frigateers named him. Père Labat hoped there would be no need for arms, but experience had taught him that a show of strength was often the surest means to peace.

"Let us to the beach," said he, picking up his skirts and leading the way, his thin ankles showing like rapidly moving stilts and his bright-buckled shoes seeming abnormally large.

With his flock behind him he came to a halt on the strand, tilted the shovel hat to shade his eyes from the brilliant morning sun and looked out to sea. There in the offing lay a brigantine. Through her gunports the round mouths of cannon yawned frankly. Her larboard gunwale was crowded with men. On the poop stood a huge figure of a bearded man with a bandanna handkerchief around his brows, a cocked hat on his head and his left hand resting on the hilt of an enormous Spanish cutlas. He wore a brilliant red shirt, and baggy corduroy breeches half eclipsed by wide-topped seaboots.

"It's Red Daniel or the mizzenmast!" chuckled Père Labat. "I ha' sailed in his *Black Spider* before—a sorry rogue in's way, but he hath still a fine respect for the bell, book and candle. But first, we shall hear what he wants."

The boat which Master Veira had seen put off from the *Black Spider* was nearing the beach. It was filled with armed buccaneers.

At the stern sat a handsome, smiling bravo who was most gorgeously arrayed in the loudest of the loud finery beloved of his calling.

"'Smiling Dick,' his mate," Père Labat commented, his eyes twinkling. "An honest lad, but much beguiled of the flesh. Ah, the rascals! They shall give me passage to Jamaica. A sight of the gibbets may be the sobering of them."

At a word from Señor Ramirez the young Veira threw a musket to his shoulder. The *alcalde* hailed the oncoming boat.

"Hold!" he cried. "What affairs have ye with us that ye would land here?"

The crew of the buccaneer boat ceased rowing at a word from the man Père Labat had called Smiling Dick, who stood up and made an extravagant bow.

"First, we want water," said Smiling Dick. "Then——"

"Aye—and then!" cried the *alcalde*. "Then, I'll take oath, ye will want a share, the lion's share, of all that we have of foods. So are we served for that we supplied your wants before. We do not welcome you!"

"So 't appears!" said Smiling Dick with an amiable grin. "But for all that, señor, water we want and must have."

"And your 'must' is your 'will,'" said Ramirez, becoming nettled at the assurance of the buccaneer. "But I say *ye shall not land!*"

"Heigh-ho!" Smiling Dick sighed humorously. "Lay a stroke, lads!"

At the word the rowers dove their blades into the sea and the boat edged toward the surf. In the breakers several of the buccaneers leaped waist-deep into the water and started to rush the craft ashore. At this, Master Veira, without waiting for further

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orders, discharged his musket. One of the pirates stumbled with a curse and was caught in the arms of his fellows.

Next instant there were several shots simultaneously, fired from both sides. A bullet from Smiling Dick's horse-pistol whizzed past Père Labat's ear. The little priest showed symptoms of pardonable irritation. He suddenly raised a voice that was most unecclesiastical in its volume.

"Dick, ye swab!" he roared. "Have ye no respect for the church!"

"*Hola, Padre!*" cried the mate, sighting the priest for the first time. "My respects to you, Chaplain, but I will be asking ye to step aside, as ye stand fair to stop a bullet either way."

Père Labat looked around. The villagers had retreated up the beach, but were facing the boat, their muskets ready and prevented from further firing only by the risk of hitting the priest. For a moment he saw that his presence in the line of fire also deterred the buccaneers, but the situation allowed them to edge the boat further in to make the disputed landing.

"One moment, my son!" he cried to Smiling Dick. "Ye ha' no right to demand provision of these people. And ye spent your careening leisure in planting the fat spots of Avès ye'd have a store of your own; but, nay, ye'd rather make barbecue and swill like hogs. But if it is but water, go back to your ship and come not ashore till I shall see to 't. No Christian may refuse the water he hath, even to a cut-throat rascal!"

"But we ha' scurvy aboard," said Smiling Dick. "We must ha' fresh fruit."

"Must! *Must!*" shouted Señor Ramirez. "Speak softly, robber, or not even a thimble of water shall ye get. Land ye shall *not*, and I speak for the people of Los Santos!"

"Aye, aye! *Si, si! Viva alcalde!* Death to him who lands!" cried the loyal islanders, leveling their muskets.

"An we give ye water, Dick," said Père Labat, "will ye begone?"

"That shall be as Red Dan hath a mind," said the mate.

"Then get ye aboard and harangue with him," said the little priest, "and say to him that Père Labat is here and seeks passage to Port Royal, and 't will go ill with his everlasting soul an he refuses me."

"Aye, aye, little Father," said Dick quite seriously, "that I will, but I pray ye in the meantime, good *Padre*, tell these whelks we will ha' water even if we spill blood drop for drop. And 'twould be as well if they brought a dozen pigs and a boatload of yams lest we take a mind to make barbecue on Los Santos."

"Heaven forbid!" said Père Labat. "I would not see the Isle of Saints the Isle of Devils. Get ye gone and wait ye aboard for my signal."

After some discussion the buccaneers hauled the wounded man into the boat and rowed back to the *Black Spider* for a conference with Red Daniel, who had been observing events through a brass telescope. Père Labat turned to the islanders.

"Will ye give them water, my children?" he inquired mildly.

"No!" thundered Ramirez. "We will fight!"

"Yes! Fight! Fight!" chorused the people of Los Santos, particularly the owners of yam-patches and pigs.

"Tut, tut!" protested the priest. "Think my children. They are human, even as He who cried from the holy cross, '*I thirst.*' Think ye our Redeemer would offer them vinegar? Shame upon you, my children!"

The people of Los Santos hung their heads. Presently the *alcalde* said:

"The *padre* is right. Of water we have abundance and it is Heaven's gift to all men alike. But of food we have none to spare and it is the fruit of our toiling. They shall have none of it!"

"So?" said Père Labat with a twinkle. "Then methinks a certain frail priest will even fast many days to Jamaica."

After some discussion it was decided to supply the buccaneers with water and with it some fresh provisions for the use of the good priest. It was a tactful way of yielding a point, for enough fresh meat and provisions were forthcoming to fatten six priests for six weeks.

But then a curious thing happened. No sooner were the provisions piled up on the beach and Père Labat had waved a signal to the watchers on the buccaneer ship, than Red Daniel, who had been studying the shore through the glass, made a signal to his men. Presently the yards swung and the brigantine's nose pointed out to sea.

To the astonishment of those on shore the *Black Spider* sailed away, utterly contemptuous of the peace offering, and leaving Père Labat vowing priestly vengeance for that he was left behind.

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"By all the saints!" he cried, "Red Dan, you shall pay for this with a hair shirt full of fleas!"

But when his indignation abated he turned upon Señor Ramirez with a shrewd eye and said:

"Set a guard, señor. It comes to me that this is a trick of that rascal, Daniel. Methinks they will come back after nightfall, which pray Heaven they do, for I must win Jamaica ere the May rains. But set a guard, señor!—set a guard!—for spiders weave in the night."

The rest of the day passed without further incident. The *Black Spider* disappeared below the horizon to the south. But at nightfall the *alcalde* of Los Santos set a couple of his young men at vantage points of the beach with orders to fire an alarm should the buccaneer ship reappear.

CHAPTER II

He was Père of the Isles o' the Windward and Lee.
He would sail with a pirate, if 't happened to be
No frigate was handy for cruising the *See*
Of the Reverend Père Labat!
—*Ballads of the Buccaneers.*

WHEN the buccaneer's mate brought the news of the shore adventure to his chief, Red Daniel, or *El Sangre*, as the Latin natives called him, did not show any improvement in amiability.

He had a full and lusty crew made up of representatives of half the world's known races. Down below he had five chests filled to the lids with gold, silver, gems in rich settings, silks, and all the miscellany of high-sea loot. In the hold he had a store of wines that would have done credit to the cellars of a castle in Spain. But what was wealth so easily-gotten against that which, in his outlawed state was so hard to come by—fresh food and water?

Of these he had run low after a protracted cruise, during which, despite the many tall ships he successfully laid by the board, looted, fired and scuttled, he had at least ten times a day cursed Harry Morgan, Sir Thomas Modyford, King Charles and the Spanish monarch. Among them these four had left Red Daniel and his fellow buccaneers of the Main in a precarious situation.

They who had yesterday been the mighty men of the Gulf and the Caribbean, those gentlemen of the sea who had waged England's war against the Spanish don and the Inquisition, were now declared outlaws, pariahs of the high seas, robbers—*pirates!*

And it was all the doing of that smooth-tongued, iron-nerved devil, Morgan—himself king of them all—in conspiracy with his Majesty, the Merry Charles and his tool, Sir Thomas Modyford, Governor of Jamaica They had tricked everybody, including Philip of Spain. Foreseeing peace between England and Spain, Charles had passed a suggestion to his tool at Jamaica. The governor of that island, Sir Thomas Modyford, had summoned Harry Morgan, the great buccaneer, had supplied him with a fine flagship, the *Revenge*, and allowed him to gather a vast fleet of ships commanded by other famous buccaneers, including Red Daniel himself. Then, while King Charles and the Spanish monarch exchanged peace overtures, Modyford whispered the suggestion—

"Loot Porto Bello and Panama while they are still treating!"

This Morgan did, as all the world knows, but what happened after that is clouded with mystery. Red Daniel only knew how it affected him and his fellows of the Caribbee. When Morgan returned to Chagres with the loot, he and it were confiscated by a British frigate. Peace had been declared before the sack of Panama, which act was therefore an offense against the peace of both kings, their crowns and dignity. Morgan was now supposedly in London, undergoing a mock trial for piracy. The loot had disappeared, probably into the coffers of the Merry Monarch, and the buccaneers who had earned it in hardship, fevers and fighting had been left in the lurch.

They had no longer the support or toleration of England. They were pirates if they remained upon the high seas and would be so treated if they entered any port seeking fresh water even. Already Gallows Point at Port Royal was a sight for the crows. Already Red Dan and other noxious pirates, who but yesterday had been honored freelances of the Main, were being chased from windward to lee-shore by a swarm of the king's frigates.

Thus Red Daniel came to Los Santos, to the little isle which knew nothing of kings and politics and which once before had stood the buccaneer in good stead when he was under the immediate necessity of checking the scurvy of his men. When Smiling Dick reported of his encounter on

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the beach, Daniel swore horribly and snarled:

"May his neck stretch on a taut rope at the Dock!" He was thinking and speaking of his late colleague, Morgan. "May he dry-rot in the chains! May the corbies pick the filthy soul of him! But, by the mizzen and main, Dick, I'll ha' water and greens if I ha' to blast and smoke it out!"

"We ha' been promised the water," said his mate. "The little chaplain, Père Labat, is there and spoke a good word for us."

"Eh?" said Red Daniel, spinning around and staring at Smiling Dick. "The chaplain—Labat, ye say? Him that shot Jerry O'Chagres at the mass?"

"Aye, aye—the same!" chuckled Smiling Dick; and Red Daniel himself began to chuckle, either at the memory of that amazing incident or for some reason of his own.

It happened aboard the craft of the buccaneer Brodeley, off the Little Tortuga. Père Labat, so the story went, came aboard and demanded passage to Cayman Island. As the buccaneers had been long at sea and were considerably steeped in their accumulation of sin, the little priest proposed to confess and shrive the lot and celebrate a mass.

These things he did. It was the most remarkable mass ever celebrated. But to Père Labat the mass was the mass, no matter how rough or humble the environment. It was held in the forward part of Brodeley's vessel, the capstan draped for an altar, a pewter mug blessed for a cup; for music a gun was fired at the *Exaudiat*, at the Elevation and at the Benediction, and a whole broadside followed the prayer for the king.

The shooting of Jerry O'Chagres occurred at the Elevation of the Host when the irreverent wretch made an obscene remark. Quick as a flash Père Labat whirled on his heel, drew a pistol from under his cassock and shot him dead.

"And the same will I do," said he, the smoke trailing from the pistol muzzle, "to any other who is disrespectful to the Holy Sacrament!"

Then he proceeded with the celebration as if nothing had occurred.

Red Daniel's humor changed on the instand. He saw a ray of hope in the little chaplain of the buccaneers. He walked up and down, tugging at his great red beard, growling and chuckling. Smiling Dick said nothing, knowing full well that by tact or force *El Sangre* would solve the problem of fresh provisions.

All at once Red Daniel stopped short and frowned. At the head of the companion appeared a woman of startling, wild beauty. She was in the prime of womanhood, neither young nor old. Tall, deep-breasted, with little feet, slender hands and a full throat, her head was crowned with a mass of black hair which set off startlingly the ivory purity of her complexion and the deep, dark eyes beneath her delicately arched brows.

Red Daniel stared at her, the frown on his brow, but in his eyes and about his nostrils a curious softening. The woman seemed unconscious of his gaze, her own lingering hungrily upon the green shore of the Isle of Santos. She had not seen land so near in months.

"Get thee below, Señora Teresa," said the buccaneer, not altogether unkindly.

She turned her full orbs upon him, and he softened to a smile of satisfaction over her beauty, and the fact that it was his by right of conquest. She suddenly put out her hands to him with a pleading gesture.

"Ah, the land—the cool, green land!" she said. "Let me but spend a little while there, señor my master. You promised, and have I not obeyed you in all things else?"

"Nay, Teresa," said the buccaneer soothingly. "Not here. We seek water and they will not let us land. It were unsafe, *carita mia*. In a few days we shall come to the Isle of Aves, and there Teresa shall be Queen of the Buccaneers. But not now. Go below, señora."

Teresa still lingered, her eyes drinking in the fresh beauty of the island's tropic riot. As she made no move Red Daniel's temper blazed out in one word—

"*Abájo!*"

The woman started, as if brutally stabbed. She went down the companion without another word.

Red Daniel took a few more turns up and down the deck, then turned upon Smiling Dick and his men with a shrewd eye.

He asked the mate for every detail of what had passed between the buccaneer crew and the *alcalde's* people, with particular reference to what Père Labat had said. The answers seemed to satisfy him hugely. He gave orders for the raising of the boat, much to the surprise of the crew who had

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anticipated its use, with others, for an immediate raid ashore.

El Sangre's actions thereafter were even more puzzling. The boat was in and yet he gave no orders to make sail. He retired to his cabin and Teresa, and Beeve Blowhard, the general factotum and butt of the buccaneer craft, was ordered to bring wine. The men, in the meantime, lolled about the decks, gambling and drinking in the moderation that *El Sangre* permitted in off-times at sea.

In the middle of the afternoon the buccaneer was summoned to the deck by Smiling Dick. The villagers had appeared on the beach carrying piles of fruits and vegetables, also pigs and fowls with their feet tied and a couple of milch goats. This Smiling Dick interpreted as a sign that no opposition would be offered to the buccaneers making a landing and filling their empty breakers from one of the islet's many springs.

But Red Daniel was dissatisfied. He studied the provision pile through his glass and growled:

"Scarce enough to make a chicken's mess for two-score slack bellies. Ah! there be the chaplain. Aye, 'tis he, the little gamecock!"

He chuckled hugely; then, to the utter bewilderment of his crew, he began to roar out orders, not for the lowering away of the boats, but for the squaring of the yards and the weighing of the anchor.

The men obeyed without protest, although they muttered among themselves. When the *Black Spider* was headed out to sea, Smiling Dick ventured a question.

"'Twill be night in three hours," said Red Daniel with a grin. "Then stand by to go about. The chaplain would ha' passage to Port Royal. 'Twould be a pest on the ship to deny him. He shall have it and we shall have what we want along wi' him! Ha!"

BY DUSK the vessel was out of view from Los Santos. Then the *Black Spider* tacked and wore until it was quite dark. Red Daniel cursed the full moon, but there was a haze upon the sea and he hoped to make the return to Los Santos Bay unobserved.

He succeeded in this. He did not dare to drop anchor until his scheme bore its first and most important fruit. The oars of the shore-going boat were muffled, and the craft, commanded by the mate and filled with picked men, armed, made the beach unobserved. The first either of the sentries knew of anything toward was when a sudden darkness descended upon the mind of the young Portuguese, Veira. They trussed him hand and foot and left him hidden in some scrub at the edge of the jungle.

Taking advantage of the fringing bushes which were the blacker against the moon's radiance on the beach, the buccaneers stole toward the village.

Presently Smiling Dick caught sight of the other sentry marching along the beach in the full moonlight, his gun shouldered and his eyes upon the sand as if he whiled his watch away with pleasant reverie. The buccaneers waited breathless in the bush until the man was almost within arms' reach. Then Smiling Dick stepped in front of him with a pistol leveled at the sentry's face.

"Drop the musket, *chico!*" said he quietly.

The sentry, completely surprised, gave a gasp and obeyed. As the weapon fell soundlessly to the sand, the other marauders sprang from the jungle's edge and seized the man, gagged and tied him, and left him lying on his back to continue his reverie under the sympathetic stars.

"Now for the pinch, lads!" whispered Smiling Dick. "Who hath mind o' the lay o' the *alcalde's* house?"

"I knows it!" said the fat English factotum, Beeve Blowhard, who had a sack tucked under his arm.

"Aye, aye," said Dick, "an' there be that whine to your pipe would make the devil weep, let alone a good priest. Y'all ha' mind o' your places? You, Slumgullion, with five, to one side of the house, and I take Swanky and his lot to the other, so we head off both ways and be ready for any rear surprise. Beeve spins the yarn at *la puerta.* Lively now and quiet!"

The one street of Los Santos lay bathed in the white light of the moon. Save for a stray cat and a few land crabs it was desolate of any living thing, although the jungle on either side behind the fringing of thatched huts and the chapel and the *alcalde's* house roared with the midnight chorus of frogs, lizards, crickets and beetles, and everywhere the air was spangled with the intermittent flashings of fireflies.

The buccaneers stole unobserved to the one substantial house of the village. It was built of blocks of volcanic stone and had an

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upper story. The buccaneer called Slumgullion and five men lined up on the shadowed side of the house, while Smiling Dick, taking the sack from Beeve Blowhard, ensconced himself with five more on the further side, which was sheltered from open observation by a clump of coffee bushes.

At a signal that all was in readiness, Beeve advanced to the *alcalde's* door and knocked. At the same time he began to sniffle audibly.

Thrice he knocked before the shutters of an upper window were thrown back and the *alcalde*, popping his head out, demanded to know who was there and what was wanted at this unearthly hour.

"The *padre!*" sniffled Beeve. "John Piggott, of York, is a-dying and seeks consolation, señor."

"John Piggott, of York!" said the *alcalde*, amazed. "He be no good Catholic, but a Quaker!"

"Aye, aye, *buen'* señor, as be I, but he hath suffered a change of heart and seeks shriving."

"Enough!" said the *alcalde*, popping in again, and closing the shutters.

To the listeners outside there presently came sounds of voices and movement within the house. At that, Smiling Dick, cautioning Beeve to remain ready to engage the priest in conversation, stole along the front of the *casa* to the side of the door. Crouching close to the wall he shook out the sack he had taken from Blowhard.

In a few minutes the door was opened and Père Labat stepped out into the moonlight. Its radiance gleamed on a silver cross that hung by a chain from his neck in startling contrast with the black robe which he was still buttoning up.

"Who art thou my son," he asked, "and what ha' befallen John Piggott of York?"

"I be Thummas Blowhard, *Padre*," whined Beeve. "I be of the Quakers, likewise. John Piggott——"

That was as far as he got, as much as it was necessary to say. Smiling Dick had stepped up behind the little priest, and the sack descended over Père Labat's head and shoulders. The *padre* did not resist but stood as if astonished out of all action.

"We mean ye no ill, Chaplain," whispered the buccaneer mate. "We be old friends and ha' no score agen you. But an ye would win to Port Royal without a drink o' seawater for thirst, keep still, *Padre!*"

From the interior of the sack came a faint chuckle, then a muffled voice saying:

"Aye, aye, Smiling Dick, ye rapscallion, but hurry and ha' done with this Quaker trick. 'Tis a sultry night and I have a mind to sneeze in this sack."

To avert such a calamity the buccaneers hurried the little priest, hooded in the sack, to the beach and the boat. They left the sentries where they had thrown them and pushed off to the *Black Spider*. It was only when Red Daniel saw the captive brought aboard that he ordered the anchor dropped. The hook went down with plangent splash which, now that it mattered nothing to the pirates, the sleepers of Los Santos failed to hear.

The buccaneer and his mate escorted the captive to the cabin. Teresa had long since retired. The sack was removed from Père Labat's head and shoulders. Freed of the thing he was promptly seized with an attack of sneezing, after which he wiped his face with a kerchief and surveyed his captors quizzically.

"*Hein!* By all the saints!" said he with a satirical note. "Eh, Dan!" wagging a finger in the buccaneer's face. "Ye will yet roast an ye fail to mend your ways. This is a scurvy trick, but blow me to Jamaica and I will forgive ye for a cup of wine to wash the dust from my throat. Sack for sack—*hein*? But will it please ye to explain, ye villain?"

"*Padre,*" said Red Daniel solemnly, "even as ye be chaplain to our souls, even so must ye minister to our bellies. Y'are held hostage, craving your charity, for water and fresh meat, and if it be not forthcoming——"

"Aye?" said Père Labat as the buccaneer paused. "And if it be not forthcoming—ye were about to say?"

"*Padre,*" said *El Sangre*, as Beeve Blowhard appeared with the wine, "here is a toast to our good-will."

"I look toward you, Daniel, you thieving rascal," said Père Labat amiably.

"And to you—chaplain to the buccaneers. May ye live long and be loved longer!"

CHAPTER III

Go tell the king of merrie England,
Go tell him this from me,
Though he be king of all the land
I will be queen at sea!
—*The Buccaneer's Bride.*

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IN THE morning, when alarm spread through the village of Los Santos after the discovery of the gagged and bound sentries and the complete evanishment of Père Labat, a rush was made to the beach, for the watchmen had been rendered dumb, but not deaf and blind.

From the beach the villagers, headed by Señor Ramirez, beheld a scene that struck them with dismay. By the mainmast of the anchored brigantine stood Père Labat, and he was guarded by a group of pirates who were armed to the teeth and held naked cutlases threateningly near his head. Higher up on the mast Smiling Dick was engaged, under the direction of Red Daniel himself, rigging a noosed rope over a yard-arm.

This adjusted to the buccaneer's satisfaction, Père Labat, whose hands were tied behind him, was hoisted to the gunwale of the vessel facing the shore, and the noose was placed around his neck. Then *El Sangre* took up a speaking-trumpet and addressed himself to the growing throng on the beach.

"Y'are given one hour, ye fat barnacles!" he roared. "Live meat and fresh greens for two-score men for two weeks, and leave to fill our breakers at the springs. Delay, or molest, and up goes Père Labat!"

It was a terrible ultimatum. It spread horror through the people of Los Santos. Hang Père Labat! Imperil Père Labat's life against a few goats and chickens and the fruits and water in which the isle abounded? Never to be thought of! Instantly a panic of activity began in fear lest *El Sangre* changed his mind and decided to hang the priest anyway.

But before they scattered Père Labat, who had seemed to be arguing with Red Daniel, cried out something. They heard his voice, but the distance was too great for his actual words to carry. Red Daniel's speaking-trumpet was passed from hand to hand and, as Père Labat's hands were tied, Smiling Dick held it up to the little priest's mouth. Then his voice came clearly to his flock on the beach.

"Hear me, my children!" he cried. "Yield not to these wicked men! Mine enemies ha' found me, but it is well with me, my sons. Be of good cheer—and yield not!"

Had he chosen to plead for the pirates he could not have done better. That Père Labat offered to swing rather than that his people should be imposed upon, settled the matter there and then. At a word from the *alcalde* the villagers scattered in every direction to obtain the required ransom.

While they came back in ones or twos carrying trussed fowls, pigs and goats and loads of fruits, yams and breadfruit, Smiling Dick put ashore in the boat and obtained the water without fear of attack, for Père Labat still stood with his hands tied, the noose about his neck and the rope drawn just taut over the yard-arm, with fat Beeve Blowhard ready to haul away at the word from Red Daniel.

As the last boatload of supplies pushed off from the shore, Père Labat's hands were released by a mere turn and he leaped lightly to the deck. A cheer went up from the land, and Señor Ramirez could see the little priest shaking his fist in *El Sangre's* face. But he did not hear what he was saying:

"Daniel, my son, ye are an irreclaimable rogue, and may the saints find extenuation for this my deception. Assure these people, now, that I will be taken to Jamaica and treated with the respect due my office. I go below in the meantime."

The last boat was unloaded and hoisted aboard. Then Red Daniel announced through the speaking-trumpet his satisfaction with the fulfilment of his terms and that Père Labat would suffer no harm. The little priest, in the meantime, went to the cabin and there came upon the woman, Teresa.

He stopped at the foot of the companion and regarded her curiously. He knew at once that she was beautiful—and unhappy. A magnificent mass of rich black hair lay spread across a pair of shapeliest ivory arms upon the cabin table. Her shoulders heaved and her sobs struck wo to Père Labat's ears.

"My daughter!" said he.

She looked up, stared at him; then her eyes filled with a sudden hopefulness at sight of his priestly robe and the little symbol of sanctuary that gleamed on his breast. With a cry of relief she stood up, came rapidly toward him and fell on her knees at his feet, seizing his two hands and bursting into a tempest of tears.

"My child! My daughter!" he expostulated, raising her gently and leading her to a seat by the table. "Who art thou? What means this? How comes one so fair—

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a lady, I perceive—in this plight, on this ship?"

For she was fair beyond all doubt and a lady of no mean birth; Spanish, he at once saw, Castilian Spanish, and her first words revealed that she was no mere woman of the ports.

"Have mercy upon me," she sobbed, "thou who hast power to absolve. Save me! But it is too late—too late! But say that I have not sinned willingly, holy man. Hear me and shrive me."

"Aye, hear thee I will with an hungry ear," said Père Labat, "and shrive thee, too, methinks. Furthermore, he who hath done thee any wrong shall pay with damnable discomfort to his soul and body. Open thy bosom to me, my daughter. I hear in the holy office."

And then she told him—all, rapidly, confusedly at first, but presently more calmly as she remembered that her tale must be told fully and clearly. Labat listened thoughtfully, but asked few questions, for it was not a new tale to him.

Her name was Teresa la Luz. She was the daughter of a rich *haciendado* of Santo Domingo. Her father's estate had been ravished by the buccaneers—among whom were Red Daniel and his fellows—six months before. By right of capture she had fallen to *El Sangre*, who had taken her to sea in his ship. He had not treated her more evilly than was to be expected, seeking indeed by kindness to win her affections.

She had ever hoped that through this very kindness he might relent and set her free upon land again. She had no desire to return to Santo Domingo under the circumstances; besides, her father and her brother, the only living relatives she had had, were killed in the raid by the buccaneers. All she now wished for, all she now hoped for, was that Père Labat, as a priest of the holy church, might grant that she had not sinned willingly and shrive her soul of the stain placed upon it.

Although the story was old to the priest who had moved much among the buccaneers, there one was thing in it which was unusual. He could not help thinking, as he listened to the tale, that the buccaneer's kindness of which the woman spoke had not been exercised in vain.

"My daughter," said he quietly, "if this man, thy master, so held thee in affection that he would even now marry thee in holy wedlock, what would be thine answer?"

Teresa looked up at the father with an astonishment that betrayed the utter newness of the thought.

"But nay, *Padre*," she said, "he hath no thought of that, but——"

"But?" insisted Père Labat with his eyes shrewdly narrowed.

"He hath been kind and—I have no prospect—no other hope."

"Then, by all the saints in the calendar of days!" exclaimed Labat, starting to his feet, "thou shalt have hope and prospect, my daughter. And Red Daniel shall have a new thought to chew ere I ha' done with him. By birth thou art his superior. He is unfit to touch the hem of thy robe, but he hath dragged thee to his own level, and in turn he shall let thee share that level at least!"

PÈRE LABAT turned in a fury toward the companion, meaning to confront *El Sangre* with his crime and his one chance of redemption, when Red Daniel himself came down from the deck.

"Ho, good Chaplain!" he cried, his great body all but blocking the foot of the companion. "The plan worked well. This night we shall feast——"

Then he stopped short, sensing danger in the flame which glowed in the eyes of the little priest who stood before him. The buccaneer's gaze moved to Teresa, whose face was filled with a mingling of new hope and old fear.

"What to do is here?" he demanded uneasily.

"Aye, this night shall we *feast*—mayhap, Red Daniel!" said Père Labat sternly, and his smallness of stature was forgotten in the greatness of his voice and the purpose behind it. "And it shall be a *wedding-feast!* What swine art thou, cutthroat, that spurns a pearl cast at his own feet? Buccaneer ye be—outcast through treachery, I grant ye; but, as Heaven is my witness, I held ye a man of rough honor, Daniel!"

He pointed a finger at Teresa, who was cowering in fear of the upshot of a scene which might result in no good to her. Père Labat thundered forth the command of the church.

"Red Daniel, out of the slough of thy dishonor I will lift thee this day, and with thee this woman for whose innocence of

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soul thy guilt is the more damnable. Thou shalt wed her within the hour or—"he snatched the little silver cross from his neck and held it aloft like some threatening sword of righteous wrath—"by bell, book and candle I curse thee into the nethermost pit of eternal remorse!"

Red Daniel wilted under the blast of threatened commination, but it was a few seconds before the alternative sank into his consciousness. Then—

"Marry?" said he, astounded.

"Marry, aye—*marry!*" thundered Père Labat.

For a few seconds more *El Sangre* stared at the little priest and at the woman whom he had considered his, body and soul, with or without benefit of clergy. Then he burst out laughing.

But the laughter quickly subsided as Père Lebat lifted the cross high over his head, as if to strike him with it. The little *padre's* eyes blazed with a strength of command that his arms could never have enforced, nor ever had need to.

Red Daniel shuffled uneasily. Then with a curious speculating look his eyes traveled to the beautiful woman, as if he weighed the added advantage of holy sanction to their relationship. In that moment he noted her great beauty, and the sorrow which was slowly but surely ravaging it stirred in him whatever genuine love he was capable of.

In a selfish way he was infatuated with Teresa's extreme stately beauty, She was his, body and soul; yet there had ever been a strange gulf between them, something which he could not bridge, and knew not why. Was it that she was a grandee's daughter and he but a rough *boucan*-stripper and curer? The very hands that had snatched her from her father's *hacienda* had weltered in the slaughter of her father's cattle. All at once his vanity was touched with the thought that he might, if he were minded, call this woman *wife*.

"Ye refuse, *El Sangre*?" demanded the priest, still with the cross aloft.

"I did not say so, good *Padre*," said the buccaneer hastily.

The cross was gently lowered and its chain replaced around the priest's neck. Père Labat smiled and quietly walked past Red Daniel, who made place for him to ascend the companion to the deck. The buccaneer and his captive were left alone together.

She looked at him, at first pleadingly, as if to avert his anger, then proudly, as one who scorned it; but in the end she faltered before his eyes in which was a new light, a new thought. She turned her head away and a wave of crimson swiftly darkened the smooth ivory of her neck. He advanced hesitatingly and laid a hand upon her shoulder.

"Teresa," he said. "Wilt have me—wilt do as he says?"

"What else is left me but to assent?" she answered without looking at him.

"Nay, *carissima*, answer me as I would wish. I may have done thee wrong, but I would fain make thee happier. Wilt wed me, Teresa?"

She turned and looked at him with the air of a queen whose favor has been presumed upon. For a moment pride's refusal hung half-formed upon her lips; then again the blood mantled her face, her eyes fell in a memory of despair and, as his great hand closed with a strange gentleness over hers, she murmured brokenly:

"*Si—Gracias a Dios!*"

The voice of Père Labat was presently heard from the head of the companion summoning them to the deck. With Teresa's hand in his, Red Daniel led his bride up the steps. The little priest, all smiles, met them and waved his arm toward the waist of the ship. There were gathered Smiling Dick, Beeve Blowhard, Slumgullion, Swanky and the whole crew of buccaneers, some of their faces stamped with utter amazement and dismay, others broadly grinning.

At sight of the latter, Red Daniel stopped and muttered a curse. For a moment he felt like a victim being led against his will to the altar of sacrifice. Like most bravos, he could face anything but ridicule. He would have withdrawn even then, but the little priest fixed him with a stern eye and his left hand moved to the silver cross and toyed with it.

"Come away, Daniel," said he quietly.

He led the couple to the center of the circle of buccaneers and called for silence.

"My sons," he said, "ye are a scoundrelly lot, but not lost to salvation by redeeming acts. This day there shall be a marriage on this ship. Whether it be hereafter registered in heaven, I know not, seeing and doing only that which is the duty of my holy office. Stand before me, Teresa

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la Luz, and—and—Daniel, ye swab," he broke off irritably, "what is your sire name?"

The surname was forthcoming, whereupon Père Labat took a little book from the breast of his cassock, turned the pages hither and thither until he found the place, then began to read the marriage service while the pirate witnesses stared or winked at each other and nudged. At a certain point the little priest stopped short and glared at Smiling Dick.

"At what do ye grin, ye rascal? An ye are to give this woman in wedlock as I appoint ye to, keep a sober countenance! What of the ring? Who has a ring?"

Red Daniel looked blank. He turned and stared helplessly at Smiling Dick. Dick in turn looked inquiringly at the other pirates. Had any one such a thing as a ring?

Down below in *El Sangre's* chests there were rings enough to decorate the fingers and toes of every person aboard, but none, not even the ornament-loving mate, ever thought to wear them on hands that were far more accustomed to wielding cutlases and hauling ropes.

For lack of a ring the progress of the wedding ceremony was temporarily delayed. Père Labat became impatient.

"Ye dolts!" he cried. "Is it that your minds are dazzled by the shine of your ears. Here, ye fat rascal," he added to Beeve Blowhard, "fetch me that gold hoop from the larboard side of your prow. There! take it thou, Daniel Gibbs, and repeat ye after me."

Beeve Blowhard's earring, which might have made a bracelet for Teresa's slender wrist, was hung on a finger of her left hand and Père Labat proceeded with the tying of the knot. And then he came to the prayers.

"Kneel, ye dogs!" said he peremptorily. "'Twill limber your necks for the rope and your knees for contrition."

The buccaneers shuffled and glanced out of their eye-corners, each desiring to see his fellows do it first.

"Down! Down, ye sinful *scaramouches!*"

Like a flock of sheep following the example of one or more of its members, the buccaneers at last got upon their knees, not without straining, groaning and muttering. Only Père Labat stood erect, his thumb marking the place in the half-closed book which he held against his breast. He lifted his eyes to the mastheads and the heavens and prayed for the happiness of the two souls he had united. And Beeve Blowhard, for some reason or other, gave vent to an audible sniffle at which the other buccaneers did not even titter.

Ashore, another congregation witnessed the strange scene. Señor Ramirez, spying through the glass, kept up a running fire of informing detail and amazed comment.

"A wedding!" gasped the villagers of Los Santos. "Ah, but he is the brave man and blessed! May the saints preserve him—Père Labat!"

"Aye, but they would do well to turn their eyes upon the weather," said the *alcalde*, half to himself.

At the end of the prayer the little priest remained silent, his face uplifted to the skies. The buccaneers did not stir, but Teresa quietly bent and kissed the great, rough hand that held hers. Then Père Labat slowly opened his eyes and gazed at the heavens.

The eyes became suddenly tense with a gleam of renewed earthly interest. There was a curious mist driving across the sun and a faint, damp, jungle odor touched the priest's sensitive nostrils. He spun around upon his heel and looked toward the island; not at the curious group on the beach, but at the treetops and the low hills to the north. There a great bank of murky cloud was massing and spreading upward. With a lusty roar Père Labat turned upon the still kneeling company.

"All hands stand up!" he roared. "Up wi' your fish-hook, Dan, ye lubber! We must run for it! She'll be safer outside! There's a norther tearing down upon us!"

CHAPTER IV

He had sailed in all craft, in all weathers and seas,
He would swear in a cyclone and preach in a breeze,
He was much agin' rum—in excess, if you please—
"In excess!" chuckled Père Labat.
—*Ballads of the Buccaneers.*

EVEN as Red Daniel and his men sprang up and at a glance took in the peril of the situation, the sails, which had hung idly during the calm, began to flap and flutter with a crackling sound that presently increased to an uproar like volleys of musketry.

While half the crew manned the windlass

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and the anchor came up to a lively heave-o chant, the other half worked like fiends, reefing, clawing clewing, their actions hampered by the contrary gusts of cold wind that seemed to come from all parts of the compass.

But suddenly and before their work was completed, the wind puffed several times fitfully, then became steady and increasing out of the north. But the main blast had not yet struck, although already the isle of Los Santos was half-hidden in a driving mist. Far away on the low hills palms were bending their heads like cattle before a sudden rainstorm, turning from it, cringing. Even then they could hear the sough and hiss of the oncoming norther where it already smote the earth.

"Lively, m' hearties!" roared Red Daniel. "Make all fast! Let the jib be! Up wi' your wheel, Hairy—up! Steady!"

The anchor clear, the brig swung her nose to the open sea. The jib filled and the *Black Spider* began to run before the fury at her heels.

"Get ye below, señora!" cried Père Labat, waving a hand toward the companion but never taking his eyes off the weather and the actions of the men. "Slack aback!" he yelled, and himself laid to upon a rope alongside of the cursing, yelling, panting buccaneers.

Then the norther burst upon the brig. The isle of Los Santos glimmered astern for a moment through the haze, then faded into obscurity like a mirage. The *Black Spider* shuddered like a stricken thing in a cold blast. There came a loud report and the jib trailed out like a streamer, flailing the wind and snapping like a mighty lash.

Then a gloom of ghastly hue surrounded the vessel. The sea lay flat under the blast, its surface spurned to a milk-like foam from which flew a mist of scud. The peaks of the fore and main masts were invisible in the overclouding murk and the burst jib was allowed to clear itself. This it did in a few seconds, ribbons of canvas flying at lightning speed away ahead of the brigantine and becoming lost in the debris the blast carried from the land.

Red Daniel was bawling orders for the bending of a trysail. The men were rushing hither and thither, unable to make themselves heard, each by the other, but working to one end.

"Y' 'ad best be lively, Dan!" Père Labat yelled in the buccaneer's ear. "She'll want steerage through the neck of the bottle!"

The priest knew the bay of Los Santos as well if not better than Red Daniel did. A reef extended in a quarter-circle between its two horns. In a direct line with a tall palm on the foreshore and the *alcalde's* house there was a break in the reef—the only entrance and exit. It was wide enough and clear enough going; but now the palm and the *alcalde's* house were lost in the drift, and so disturbed was the face of the sea that, until right upon the spot, the eye could not distinguish the churn of the reef top from the lesser turmoil of the passage.

To add to their difficulty the gaff of the trysail gave way before a blast that beat anything *El Sangre* or Père Labat had ever dreamed possible in nature. Two men—they did not know who they were until afterward—went quietly overboard and were seen no more. The *Black Spider*, like its namesake emerging frayed from a battle, scudded helplessly before the wind. Three men hung on to the wheel trying to hold her head to the westward where lay the reef passage, but the norther caught the brig on the quarter and she fell away to leeward like a chip in a current.

Then a yelling came from forward. Red Daniel and Père Labat understood what they did not hear by the frantic gestures of the buccaneers, who waved their arms, pointed and worked their mouths. Out of the spume ahead arose a belt of tumbled white foam, like a ridge at the edge of a waterfall, a slight rise on the level of the sea and, beyond it, a distinct step downward.

"The reef!" shouted the little priest.

"'Twill tear the guts from her!" roared *El Sangre*.

"But nay! There's a chance!" cried Père Labat. "Look!"

He pointed to the right. There the foaming ridge faded out, and the sea tumbled upon a more level plane. At the same time the little priest unbuttoned the length of his cassock with one mighty rip. He cast the black robe of his office aside and, a slim figure in buckled shoes, knee breeches and a ruffled lawn shirt, sprang to aid the men already at the wheel.

"Up with it, ye swabs!" he cried. "Up! Sit on it, Hairy! Sit on it! Hang on it, ye lubbers!"

The *Black Spider* seemed to force her head to starboard. Again the blast caught

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her quarter and she made leeway, but Père Labat's order had saved the ship and the lives of its crew, at least temporarily.

She sheered past the reef edge where it blunted and sank into the passage. But even as she shot by, there came a shock followed by a grinding that jarred to the very soul of the vessel.

"She's struck!" howled the men at the wheel.

"Hang on, ye villains! She's riding over it!" roared the little priest.

The *Black Spider* lurched. The blast caught her stern again and seemed to heave her end up. Again came the horrible grinding and a more awful lurch. The brigantine dove forward, nose down. It was as if she were headed straight for the bottom. An ear-splitting crack sounded, like the burst that comes simultaneously with a lightning bolt. The foremast swayed, then toppled forward as if seeking doom ahead of the bowsprit which it tore with it in the mighty fall.

For a minute thereafter pandemonium reigned aboard the *Black Spider*. The men abandoned the wheel, as did Père Labat; for, sink or swim, the vessel could no more be steered. The wheel spun without resistance, then jammed. The reef had torn away the rudder.

Père Labat rushed to the side of Red Daniel, who was roaring forth curses upon heaven, earth and all the elements thereof.

"Tut, tut, Daniel!" cried the little priest. "A scurvy wedding-trip, I grant ye, but 'tis no time for cursing, nor for praying either. See to the well and man the pumps beforehand!"

"Y' are right, Chaplain!" cried Daniel in the voice of a foghorn that was yet like a squeal through the harsh roar of the tempest. "An we keep her afloat she may drive before it to one o' the islands southard!"

He ordered Smiling Dick below to investigate and at the same time gave orders for the rigging of the pumps.

"We are in the hands of God," said Père Labat.

For all the calm quiet with which he said it, the words were clearly heard. He had the strangely carrying voice of the preacher. A half-breed named Gonsalez heard the philosophic utterance and suddenly came to the priest. He dropped on his knees, clasped his hands and, although what he said did not reach Père Labat's ears, it was clear that he sought absolution. The priest's action and its accompanying remark were peculiarly characteristic, if unecclesiastical.

"God hates the whine of a coward!" said he and, deliberately planting his buckled shoe on the coward's shoulder, he sent him spinning over on his back.

The act had a curious effect upon the buccaneers, who a moment before had been as despairing as Gonsalez. Through the howl of the storm came a faint cheering and laughing, and the men turned to again with a new spirit, intent upon saving the ship long enough to save themselves.

At this moment Smiling Dick reappeared and reported that the *Black Spider* was in a parlous state, but she might be kept afloat for a number of hours. She was leaking badly forward where she had first struck the reef. Apparently she had ended up through the force of the shock and the following blast, straddled the reef and dived forward. In the plunge she had ripped her rudder clear off, and there she was leaking, too.

It was the hole in the bow that was likely to cause her foundering and to this Red Daniel at once turned his fight. The hole was patched with blankets, sacks, even the cushions and curtains from Teresa's boudoir, then closed over with nailed boards. The same was done over the lesser stern leak, but already the vessel had made a great deal of water and for a time the frantic labors of the men at the pumps made little headway.

"Never say die, Daniel!" cried Père Labat cheerily. "God is good, even to the worst. Drop all else, for 'tis no avail in this, which is the act and will of the Lord; but use all thy strength to the pumps. I go below to see how the lady fares."

He made his way to the companion, at the head of which he looked back along the deck. The *Black Spider* presented a sorry sight, but although somewhat low in the water Père Labat was satisfied that she was at least gaining none by the leaks. Then the little priest, a mere wisp of a man in damp, clinging shirt and knee-breeches dived down into the cabin. Here he found Teresa standing upon the settle which ran along the mahogany-finished wall. Her finger-tips upheld her dress and in her eyes was unspeakable alarm, for the floor was awash and in the rolling water there floated all sorts of debris, including rolled charts and a globe map.

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Père Labat waded ankle deep across the cabin and, mounting to the settle, laid a hand upon Teresa's shoulder. She was several inches taller than he.

"Fear not, my daughter," said he, "God is good!"

"I am not afraid," she replied quietly. "Yesterday I might even have welcomed this end."

"But today, daughter?" said he with a twinkle.

"I do not know," she said.

The holy hour had passed and with it the immediate comfort of benediction. Again she was assailed with doubt.

"It may be as well," she added, "for my heart tells me there is never happiness for Teresa la Luz until——"

The brigantine lurched violently. Teresa reeled and would have fallen into the wash had not Père Labat caught her. With the roll of the ship another pile of cabin ornaments joined the charts and the globe map in the floundering pool of the cabin floor.

AT THAT moment Red Daniel and two of the buccaneers came staggering down the unsteady companion. With a curse *El Sangre*, with merely a glance at Teresa and Père Labat, waded splashily to a closet at the far end of the cabin, opened it and drew forth several bottles of liquor. He tossed one to each of the buccaneers who accompanied him and struck the head off another with a sweep of his cutlas. He was about to drink when Père Labat sprang from the settle into the wash, splashed to his side and snatched the bottle from *El Sangre's* hand.

"You swine!" he cried contemptuously. "An it be the will of God that ye come this day to His judgment, shall ye appear in His courts staggering drunk and liquor-penitent?"

Red Daniel glared at the little priest. The other two buccaneers growled and gripped their bottles by the neck, as if they would welcome the word to brain the obstructor, lay or holy.

"Avast, Chaplain!" roared Red Daniel. "Y'are here by my favor, an' ye be not more meek, thy cloth shall not protect ye! Push me not against the wall, Labat, or by God——"

"By—*Whom*?" the little priest inquired, as if he had not heard rightly.

Red Daniel fumed, then having no wit to match the little priest's, began to offer excuses.

"We be sore-pressed men," he said. "'Tis but right we should take heart in our labors."

"Aye, aye," said Père Labat. "Ye speak right, *El Sangre*. 'Tis even so laid down in the Book. 'Give wine to him that is sad of heart and to him that would die,' or something similar. But I ha' no mind o' a swill for them that are desperate!"

As he spoke he himself rummaged in the cupboard and produced several silver goblets. He filled three of them and passed them to Red Daniel and his two comrades.

"Drink," said he, "for thou wilt ha' need of heart."

The buccaneers, amazed, took the goblets in hand. In doing so the other two set aside the sealed bottles, which the little priest promptly gathered to him. Red Daniel laughed and put the cup to his lips.

"I looks toward you, Chaplain," said he.

"I observes it and bows," said Père Labat drily. "Now get ye back to the deck, relieve the men at the pumps and send them down to me. They will ha' need o' heart likewise. I ha' naught against rum—save in excess."

As he spoke he filled out a bumper and lifted it to his own lip with a chuckle. Over the rim he glanced first at Señora Teresa, then at Red Daniel.

"And this be thy wedding-day, friend Daniel," said he. "*A votre santé! A vuestra salud!*"

And so the day passed until night came down with a drear prospect for the *Black Spider* and her buccaneer crew. Père Labat kept a strict watch over the liquor in the cabin and did his best to carry Teresa through the perilous day. For the most part she was listless, sadder even, it seemed, for the thought of the happiness which might have been hers but for a presentiment of soul which haunted her. At intervals the men, relieved from the pumps, staggered, panting, down the companion and Père Labat cheerfully poured them a goblet of wine or a jorum of rum, as their fancy dictated.

When night came the storm was still raging, although its first fury had abated and settled into a steady hurricane, accompanied by occasional bolts of lightning and claps of deafening thunder. The *Black Spider* was for the present a helpless wreck

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and little shift could be made to improve her, for the time being at least.

With the falling of darkness there was nothing to see or do on the deck, save for those whose turn it was at the pumps. It was then that Père Labat invited—yes, invited!—all hands save the pump men to the cabin. Headed by Red Daniel—Smiling Dick holding the watch—they came below as obediently as sheep following their shepherd. A place was made for Teresa on the settle where she sat cross-legged with her buccaneer lord and master beside her, his topboots sunk in the wash that still invaded the cabin floor.

The other buccaneers ranged around the table, sitting on stools, upturned kegs or whatever offered. Père Labat sat at the head of the board on one of *El Sangre's* treasure-chests and within reach of the liquor cupboard.

From this he drew several bottles and a number of goblets. He poured for the entire company, then coolly produced a long clay pipe which he packed with tobacco and lighted. The buccaneers, grinning, followed his example, and presently the whole company was sipping a congenial goblet and puffing away at the weed. Even Teresa took a sip from Red Daniel's cup and made herself a cigaret, Spanish fashion, rolling the leaf on her thigh with a single sweep of the hand, a second movement bringing it to her red lips.

"And now," said Père Labat, "this is no time for praying. God even respects a sinner who can take his deserts like a man. When the peril is over, if such be Heaven's will, we shall see how much your prayers be worth. In the meantime, let us have a tale —a song! Swanky, or Hairy, or thou, Slumgullion—strike us a line of 'Hanging Johnny,' the which is a fitting ballad for such rapscallions."

Five minutes later the men at the pumps heard from below a nasal howling to the words:

They call me Hanging Johnny.
Away—aye—oh!
They call me Hanging Johnny,
So hang, boys, hang!

Story followed song, and song followed story. The buccaneers took cheer and Père Labat did not stint them a little wine in moderation. Even Teresa's face took on some color and she smiled. Presently her hand stole into Red Daniel's and she covertly watched him with a little speculative pucker of her brows. When the round came to Père Labat and he was asked for a story, he cocked one of his eyes thoughtfully, took a whiff or two at his clay pipe and suddenly began.

"Once upon a time——"

And five minutes later there was a strange hush in that cabin. The buccaneers were listening open-mouthed. It was a story that strangely appealed to them in their perilous condition, for it was of the sea and a great tempest and how a ship and its people were saved.

Possibly some of them recognized vaguely a familiar story of their childhood, but Père Labat had his own way of relating the tale of the storm on Galilee. To most of the buccaneers, however, it was as if the incident had happened but yesterday and Galilee was but some place not a hundred miles to leeward, possibly near Trinidad or the mouth of the Orinoco.

He told them how the Master sought with His disciples to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and how a great tempest arose and the sea became so high that His little vessel was awash. He was asleep during all this time and His Father, who watched, did not let anxiety intrude upon His slumbers. But as the storm grew worse and it seemed that all must perish, the crew and the disciples took counsel together and sought of Him that spiritual consolation which is so dear to the craven in spirit when the hour of judgment is at hand, instead of being righteous when they enjoy the blessings of life and confident they are deserving when the clouds gather.

"And the crew and His followers rushed to Him where He lay in the after part of the ship, sleeping like a child."

At this point Père Labat laid aside his pipe and, suiting the action to the word, closed his eyes and sank his head wearily upon his two hands. Amid a hush that followed, four men, just relieved from the pumps, came down the companion.

"*Sshl*" cautioned the priest's little audience, silently making room for the newcomers on the stools and kegs.

Père Labat remained in the attitude of sleep until the disturbance subsided, then he opened his eyes slowly and said:

"Why are ye fearful? Ye have little faith. God is good and He watches, over

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the worthy and the unworthy alike. And the Master arose from His sleep and lifted His face and spread His hands out over the raving wilderness of howling turmoil."

The little priest arose, too, and his face was all radiant and full of a childlike faith in the great truth behind the tale he told. Into the little pause there crept the sullen roar of the hurricane without, the wash of the waves, the gurgle of the waters on the cabin floor. He spread out his hands and said gently:

"'*Peace, be still!*' And when the Master thus rebuked the storm, the wind heard and became quiet; the waves fell at His feet. And since that night, men who go down into the sea have had no fear, but the great faith that, for weal or wo, it shall be as God wills."

Again there was a curious hush in the cabin, the more marked that in that moment there seemed to be a lull in the roaring tempest without. Teresa's hand was tightly clasped in Red Daniel's and her eyes were fixed moistly upon his knitted brows. Beeve Blowhard had two great tears threatening to course down his fat cheeks. The other buccaneers were motionless, open-mouthed, silent.

"And now," said Père Labat. "The hour grows late. Some of us may sleep. Have no fear. God watches—and He hates the whine of a coward!"

CHAPTER V

And such a port for mariners I ne'er shall see again
As the pleasant Isle of Avès, beside the Spanish Main.

—*The Last Buccaneer.*

WHEN Père Labat came on deck soon after daylight next morning, Red Daniel and his crew—all but the two men who had gone by the board on the previous day—were grouped on the starboard side and staring to the southward.

The *Black Spider* was drifting almost broadside before the last strength of the dying norther. The sea had gone down, but it was wildly choppy and its yellowish hue betokened the nearness of land. Occasional sheets of rain scurried across the ocean's face, further flattening it; but the abruptness with which the rain-squalls came and passed was significant.

"'Twill be fine weather in an hour!" said Red Daniel, "and if I know one white beach from another, yon be the north shore of Avès."

"Aye, aye," chuckled the voice of Père Labat, appearing among them suddenly. He was bareheaded, but wore his cassock, which was wrinkled but dry, and his left hand toyed with the little silver cross on his breast. "That be Avès, my sons, and had the choosing been thine instead of Heaven's, ye would ha' spoke up for no better place. 'Tis your own careening ground. 'Tis as if a winged bird had been blown headlong into its own nest. How now are the righteously inclined this morning?"

As he spoke the clouds broke and through the rift straggled a ray of sunlight. It struck the deck, and Père Labat's bared head and smiling face seemed to be the center of the halo. The pirates shuffled uncomfortably. The danger was past; there was Avès; they would drift on a soft sandy beach and step ashore almost dry-shod; and again they preferred belief in blind luck to any more personal God.

"You, Gonsalez, that sought absolution!" said Père Labat with gentle irony, singling out the half-breed with his keen, twinkling eyes. "Now, methinks, is the proper time for a word of thankfulness. Ye were mightily inclined toward mercy yesternight. Gonsalez will take the lead! Come forward, Gonsalez. Down on your shanks, ye penitent pirate! And the rest o' ye, too. So long as I am aboard this rascally craft God is the Master and I am His first mate!"

There was some grumbling, but presently he had beaten them to their knees. Père Labat offered a brief prayer of gratitude for their salvation, while the sea-wind, becoming gentler and warmer every moment played through his thin hair and the sun-ray fell and danced upon his little bald spot. When he had finished he told them they could rise.

"There!" said he. "How simple a thing it is; and I wager ye feel the better for it. 'Tis but that thy necks are stiffer than thy knees. Now, Red Daniel, ye may resume charge of affairs."

While Père Labat went below to break the good news to Teresa, *El Sangre* turned his glass upon the shore.

There was no longer doubt about the island. It was Avès, the old careening ground of the buccaneers of the main; the rendezvous of Mansvelt and the traitor Morgan; the scene of many a barbecue,

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many a pirate debauch; an island that could tell more tales than could the rest of the Caribbees put together, for it was the clearing-house of the Spanish Main.

As luck, or Providence, would have it the norther had driven the *Black Spider* upon the island, the north shore of which was a crescent white beach, flanked by two piles of rocks and backed by a fringe of tropic luxuriance. Although at the lip of the strand breakers rolled and burst whitely, *El Sangre* knew that the fathomage was good and in perfect accord with the sharp slant of the beach.

To add to the luck the tide was half-way between high and low, and ebbing. As the *Black Spider* now drifted she would ground not far from the eastern pile of rocks, on a clear strand almost within their shadow and shelter. They could anchor the brigantine to the beach and in half an hour, when the ebbing tide had left her high and dry, walk ashore to the old buccaneer camping ground, carrying with them their provisions, sails for tents—and the treasure chests.

Thereafter, during the low tides, the work of repairing the *Black Spider* could go forward. Thanks to the good people of Los Santos, they had plenty of fresh meat. The Isle of Avès itself had an unlimited supply of fresh water, fruits, fish and feathered game. The buccaneers were not only in luck but on the eve of a splendid holiday ashore, and their spirits, reacting from the depression of the night, soared accordingly.

While Red Daniel and his men made shift to set a sail at the ship's head to bring her nose upon the beach, Père Labat brought Teresa to the deck. The señora this morning was pale and there were dark shadows about her eyes, but at sight of the land her face lighted and she slipped her hand into the *padre's*.

"Oh, the land—the land!" she whispered. "How green it is after the long days at sea! 'Tis even greener than Santos, *Padre*."

"Aye, señora, 'tis indeed a beauty spot. I ha' no mind of a lovelier. I was here with the buccaneer, Brodeley. The woods are filled with orchids and humming birds, and parrots that quarrel with the tongues of Babel. Indeed, my daughter, 'tis Eden, not forgetting the serpent."

"Ah—the serpent! Always the serpent!" she sighed.

"Always," said Labat philosophically. "But what would you, my daughter? We must content to leave perfection to paradise; else what promise would the hereafter hold? But Avès hath a likening to it."

Señora Teresa closed her eyes and her smooth brows knitted slightly. On the edge of happiness, presentiment knocked at her heart and made its beat momentarily falter.

"Think you he will let me go ashore?"

"I will myself answer for that," said Père Labat incisively. "But why not, my daughter? 'Twas his intention and promise, was it not? Besides, thou'rt now his wedded wife." The little priest chuckled. "'Tis the Jewel of the Caribbees, and the Queen of the Caribbees shall see the love-moon there, I'm thinking."

The red blood surged under Teresa's ivory skin and she turned away from the chuckling little priest, who thought he yet saw possibilities of happiness for this woman.

In less than half an hour the *Black Spider* slid without more than a sluggish jolt upon the shallows of the beach. With the aid of the sail she had been deftly maneuvered close under the eastern bluff of rocks. At Red Daniel's orders several of the men leaped overboard, swam until they found bottom, then received the end of a stout rope from the brigantine. This they bore up the beach and made fast to the stem of a tall coconut palm.

By the time the brig was temporarily made fast, the tide had dropped so that the vessel listed slightly upon its stranded keel and the buccaneers began the task of transferring the supplies to the shore. From there they were later to be carried up the beach, through a little belt of woods to a clearing which had been for half a century the camping-ground of the Knights of the Caribbee.

But first, at Père Labat's demand, a rope ladder had been lowered over the larboard bow and Red Daniel himself had descended into the sea, which rose almost to his armpits.

"Careful, my daughter!" said the little priest, assisting Teresa over the gunwale on to the ladder, which she descended until she found herself in the arms of her buccaneer lord and master.

El Sangre laughed as he lifted her clear of the sea and began to wade ashore with her.

"'Tis a pretty picture!" cried Père Labat

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from above, and when Red Dan set his bride down on her feet upon the white sand, the *padre* clapped his hands in approval and sang out: "Buss her now, ye dolt! Buss her, or must I come ashore and set ye an example?"

Red Daniel laughed, almost boyishly, and kissed his bride, who colored deeply and glanced shyly up at the buccaneer's red-bearded face. Then Père Labat summoned *El Sangre* back to the foot of the ladder and himself climbed down with his cassock skirts carefully tucked up free of his buckle-shoed feet.

Up above, Smiling Dick smothered a grin with his hand to behold the spectacle of Red Daniel, up to the armpits in the sea, being made a saddle-burro for Père Labat. The little priest, as calmly as if he mounted a mule, threw one skinny leg around *El Sangre's* off shoulder and then drew the other over the near one. Clasping his hands around the buccaneer's hairy chin he said cheerily:

"Now, my son! An ye stumble and souse me I shall make thee carry sand in thy boots for a week!"

But Red Daniel did not stumble. He brought Père Labat dry-shod to the beach and set him down beside Teresa. The little priest merely waved two fingers and said—

"Bless ye, Daniel, ye cut-throat!"

Then he turned to the señora.

"Come, my daughter," said he. "Let us smell the greenwood together."

Teresa glanced at Red Daniel. He bade her go with the priest. He and his men would be busy for hours. Together Père Labat and the beautiful Spanish woman went up the beach and stepped within the fringe of tropic forest. They had gone but a few paces when Teresa stopped, pressed her hands against her bosom, lifted her face, drew a deep long breath and said—

"A-a-ah!"

Any one who has ever stepped from a vessel that has been long months at sea and five minutes later found himself in the primeval greenery of the tropics, may understand this woman's feeling.

The air was sweet and cool, touching the palate like a fine wine or a draft from a mountain stream. It was tanged with the odor of fresh foliage, decaying wood and ripe fruits. A faint mist hung in strata across the greenish-blue half-light of the deeper jungle. From the tree-tops, sunlit against a fleeced sky—for the rain-clouds had been swirled away—came a continuous fluttering and queer half-human exclamations. There was a flock of gold-green parakeets there.

In the trunks of the trumpet, yacca, Santa Maria and dogwood trees hung Spaniard's beard and other strange parasite mosses, and rope bridges of lianas along which rainbow-like lizards scurried in play after the rain. From the tree-crotches drooped orchids with delicate, fantastic petals, and around these, humming-birds, no larger than bees, hung stationary in air, their wings beating so rapidly that they appeared to the eye as gossamer lashes.

"It is paradise!" Teresa murmured dreamily.

Père Labat wisely did not destroy her illusion by drawing attention to a curious squirming bunch that depended from the limb of a tree—a knot of young serpents clinging to their mother, whose tail was woven about the limb for support.

AN HOUR later, Teresa and the *padre* having wandered in the beautiful woods until the air whetted a thought of food, they came out on the clearing, which was within the belt of trees but a hundred yards to the south of the point where they had first entered the bush.

Ere they reached it the savory smell of roasting meat came to their nostrils, together with the merry shouts of the buccaneers. But Père Labat was frowning as he stepped into the clearing. His keen eyes took in the situation at a glance.

In the center of the clearing was an immense bonfire at the edge of which lay the carcass of a pig which Beeve Blowhard was about to thrust into the glowing embers he had opened from the heart of the fire. Besides the pig there were a number of fowls being spitted over the flames, and from time to time Beeve speared a blackened breadfruit from the fire, examined it and thrust it back. The fat English buccaneer was very red in the face, no doubt from the fire, but Père Labat noted that, despite his perspiring discomfort, Beeve trolled forth a lusty song about how whisky killed his dad. Nevertheless he, Beeve Blowhard, lyrically maintained that he would drink it when and wherever he could get it. It was an old halyards chantey.

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Around the clearing lay all sorts of ship merchandise; kegs, canvas, ropes, barrels of biscuit, galley utensils and—set somewhat apart so that it could not be missed for a moment—an old-fashioned iron-and-brass-bound chest with a huge lock upon it. Père Labat knew it as *El Sangre's* particular private treasure-chest.

While Beeve cooked and howled his ballad, the buccaneers came and went through the belt of trees between the clearing and the north beach, bringing more stuff from the ship and returning empty-handed for more. Père Labat noted that a canvas sail had been spread for a tent for the señora and led her to it. He left her in its shelter, promising to return presently. In the meantime he wished to look around.

The island at this point was very narrow, widening westward, but closing in eastward to the sheltering point of rocks. Through the trees to the south of the clearing a white beach and the Caribbean were plainly visible; but both belts, merged into the dark background of the forest, were dense enough to conceal the camping ground from the open sea to north and south.

Père Labat made his way through the northern belt to the beach where the *Black Spider* was stranded. Half-way through the sandy bay he stopped short. He observed a group of buccaneers gathered at the foot of a *ceiba* tree and half-hidden between two of its massive buttresses. There was an open cask there and a dipper and as the pirates returned empty-handed they helped themselves to rum from its spigot.

"The serpent!" muttered Père Labat, now fully confirmed in his suspicion about the cheerfulness of Beeve Blowhard.

But he did not interfere. They were buccaneers. This was the Isle of Avès. By the mere association of this island and the memory of former visits, the buccaneers were already indulging the holiday spirit of the place. By night they would be gorged with food and helpless with liquor. It was their relaxation, and the little priest was too wise to think of even a protest. Better that they should have their inevitable barbecue and its accompanying debauch and be done with it. The sooner they were short of food and rum the sooner would the *Black Spider* be repaired and put to sea again. Jamaica was a long way off and the *padre* desired to get there—some time.

But his heart ached for the unhappy Señora Teresa.

Avoiding the men beneath the *ceiba* he made his way deviously to the north beach. There he sat down in the shelter of a cocoanut and studied the brigantine. She lay high and dry, listed over on her larboard side. On the forecastle Red Daniel, slightly unsteady on his feet, was bawling orders to the men in the hold and to the carriers overside. In the wet, glistening sand of the low tide was a boat which they had lowered from the brig. The little craft, which had been damaged merely where others had been swept away in the norther, was upturned. Smiling Dick, with the aid of a couple of handy fellows, was repairing it against the return of the tide, when it would save a deal of wading.

It took Père Labat but a few moments to realize that hardly a man of the crew could be called sober, and he prepared himself for at least twenty-four hours of extreme tolerance and patience. After that, possibly he might regain ascendency over the rascals, but he knew that to pretend he had not lost it now would be fatal.

Matters developed as he surmised they would. By noon the buccaneers, including the leaders, *El Sangre*, and his mate, Smiling Dick, were sufficiently intoxicated to have a craving for food and a dislike for further labor. By that time, too, a large quantity of the more important necessities—particularly for the barbecue—had been landed and shouldered through to the clearing.

The wind had gradually swung around and now blew balmily from the southwest. It was warm, but not hot. The cool, sweet breath of the woods added to the cheer of the shellbacks ashore. The woods rang with their shouts of childish glee over little discoveries of strange birds, stranger insects and even the odd beauty of a particular flower.

But above all sounded the bellowing of several ribald voices uplifted in a variety of buccaneer ballads, all sung at the same time and in different keys. The parakeets screamed protest and, failing to make any impression, took flight in a shrieking blue-green cloud to more remote and peaceful corners of the gorgeous isle.

Père Labat returned somewhat sadly to the clearing and to the tent where Teresa crouched with a new dread creeping upon

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her. She welcomed the little priest with both hands and a sigh of relief. He patted her hands confortingly and advised her to keep under cover as much as possible.

"But if you are called into the circle," he said, "obey. To appear unwilling, or offended, might have disastrous consequences. Pray Heaven, my daughter, that they drink enough to diminish the cursed store and lay themselves on all fours like the beasts they are!"

By two o'clock in the afternoon the clearing was bedlam. Red Daniel was still too busy to have leisure and himself drunk enough to imagine that his men were in need of a sobering influence. He tried to keep the buccaneers at work, but Père Labat noticed that, while he cursed the inebriates, *El Sangre* made as many trips to the cask as the rest, and it was by his own order that two more were broached when in his rage he found that the first was empty. Quarrels about trivial differences grew out of all proportion.

Twice *El Sangre* separated couples who engaged to settle their disputes with cutlases, and the third time he himself drew a pistol and fired aimlessly at Slumgullion. The bullet flew wide and dislodged a coconut from a young tree. The nut barely grazed the head of the shaggy buccaneer called Hairy, who had to be assured that it was not the bullet had barely missed him before he consented to observe a truce. This was the more readily effected when Beeve Blowhard, who had fallen into the fire and been hauled out, singed, announced as a result of his investigation in the embers that the barbecue was ready!

Then for ten minutes the scene was suggestive of a cannibal orgy on a Pacific island. Shouting and yelling obscene jests and snatches of equally lurid ballad, the buccaneers speared the roasted carcasses from the fire and hacked them to pieces with their cutlases. Red Daniel hilariously consenting, the treasure-chest was ransacked for goblets. These not being forthcoming speedily enough, the chest was turned upside down. A mass of loose gold and silver, numbers of tied leather sacks filled with sorted money, boxes containing gems and a loose miscellany of bangles, necklaces and plate littered the ground.

There were not enough cups and goblets to go around. Those who were disappointed found and utilized as receptacles for their liquor, conches from the beach, coconut shells from the brush and even parts of bottles from which, in previous debauches on this gorgeous isle, the necks had been struck off.

As soon as their immediate needs were supplied, the buccaneers withdrew to the cool shade of the trees away from the blazing barbecue fire and began to gorge and drink. They tore great joints of meat with their fingers and teeth, or, ripping the best of the flesh off with their cutlases, hurled the remainder back into the fire, which presently roared up in a greasy flare. They washed down the food with great gulps of rum and roared in holiday mirth and abandon.

At the height of the orgy, from which Père Labat kept discreetly aloof, Red Daniel, seated on the upturned chest that he might keep guard over the loose treasure, suddenly took thought for his wife, whose very existence had escaped his mind for hours.

"Ho, Teresa!" he bellowed. "Come here! Where is my beauty? By the eternal soul o' me, she shall drink a toast wi' me! Ho, señora!"

Even as Teresa started up, terror-stricken, in the tent, the flap fell aside and Père Labat stood before her, smiling, undaunted, seeming quite unconcerned.

"Come, my daughter," he said quietly. "Thy lord and master summons. 'Tis a good wife who obeys. And—remember!"

She stepped out of the tent and walked alone, smiling but pale, toward *El Sangre*. At sight of her, thrice more beautiful through their fired eyes, the buccaneers set up a roar of welcome.

"Drink, ye scum—drink!" cried Red Daniel, rising unsteadily from the chest and waving a rum-filled goblet over his head. "*To the bride of El Sangre!*"

CHAPTER VI

She has put her foot on good ship-board,
Among ship-men she's gone,
And the veil they hung upon her hair
With gold and diamonds shone.
—*The Buccaneer's Bride.*

FROM behind the little sail-tent Père Labat watched with an anxious eye. He did not show himself and would not if he could avoid making an appearance. The pirates had forgotten him. To remind

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them would be to thrust before their rum-fired minds a reminder of their quite recent contrition than which there is nothing more infuriating to a sinner who has lapsed from grace.

The Señora Teresa was playing her part well. The little priest knew the horror concealed by her calm smile as she came to a halt within the circle of buccaneers that swayed around her. Smiling Dick, perhaps the soberest of the whole wild crew and possessed of a delicacy which, with his fondness for dress, suggested a gentleman of other days, or a gentleman's son, stepped forward with a bow and proffered Teresa a beautiful spray of snow-white orchid. Teresa stared for a moment at the incongruous thing; then, with a smile and a pretty gesture, she took the spray from Dick's hand and placed it on her head, where it lay startlingly like a crown of snowflakes against her dark hair and queenly face.

The buccaneers cheered again and this time the cheer was as much for Smiling Dick as the bride of *El Sangre*. Red Daniel scowled stupidly at his mate. He felt he had reason for offense here, but could not place the finger of his mind on it. He would fain have known the trick of a little action like that not being aware that forethought is the father of gallantry.

"Marry!" cried Beeve Blowhard, "she be Queen o' the Buccaneers! Dick ha' crowned her proper!"

"Aye!" said *El Sangre*, stung to gallantry on his own behalf. "But I be King o' the Buccaneers, and 'tis ever the king makes a queen. So 'tis done proper in royal courts. And by the eternal soul o' me, 'tis in my mind to crown her as never a queen was decked, not wi' smelly weeds that will fade in the hour an' smell worse, but wi' treasure that would turn Sheba green an' Solomon love-sick!"

Red Daniel glared around the circle until his eyes finally rested on his mate in challenge. Smiling Dick took off his plumed hat and swept the ground with it.

"The king, gentlemen!" he cried with a slight tinge of mockery.

"Aye, aye! King Dan'el, the Red! *El Sangre* forever!" roared the buccaneers, catching their cue.

The buccaneer chief grinned, then turned his eyes upon Teresa, who stood there smiling, her chin uptilted coquettishly and her hands on her hips, Castilian fashion. She seemed to be enjoying the tribute to her womanhood; only Père Labat knew of the tortures that racked her sensitive soul.

"Come here to me, my beauteous Majesty," said Red Daniel, his clumsy attempt at gallantry of speech rendered ridiculous by a loud hiccup. He pointed to the upturned chest which he had vacated. "Here be thy throne, liege lady. Ascend! Be—'ic—seated!"

Teresa, still smiling like a mask, did as she was commanded. She sat upon the chest and when *El Sangre*, dropping upon his knees, presented her with his cutlas, hilt foremost, she took it and held it aloft, whereat the buccaneers again cheered and roared.

"Sir Beeve, the Bull!" cried Red Daniel getting to his feet, immensely flattered with himself. "Come hither!"

Beeve Blowhard came forward, made a ridiculous bow in which his stomach collided with his knees and Red Daniel dubbed him "Royal Chamberlain" on the spot.

"Produce the —'ic—crown jewels!" commanded King Daniel the Red, while the buccaneers hugged themselves with joy and mirth. "Select the pink o' the loot, ye swab, for by the eternal soul o' me she shall make the very sun blink this day!"

The treasure from the upturned chest, which was now Teresa's throne, lay scattered on the ground around it. A score of hands and a score of knees got down among it instantly and immediately there was pressed into the fat Royal Chamberlain's hands a various selection of jeweled and golden trinkets, as fancy suggested, to deck the queen.

It was Smiling Dick who rose from the costly pile with an object that looked like a crown and may have been one. It was a flat circle of gold, serrated at the upper edge and studded around with precious stones—flaming red and yellow opals, jaspers, sunstones, jades, garnets and, in front, one immense aquamarine beryl. It had come from the loot of a Spanish galleon and its history might have been traced to the Aztecs of Mexico or the Incas of Peru.

With this Red Daniel crowned the Queen of the Buccaneers, throwing aside Smiling Dick's white orchid as he did so. The mate's handsome face grew dark and his cutlas flew from its sheath with a ring and a quiver. In the pause between Red Daniel's hand groping for the cutlas that was not in

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its sheath and flashing to the butt of a pistol, the mate's point was almost at his throat, but Teresa, in whose hand was the chief's blade, struck down the other's cutlas and rushed between the combatants. With her back to Red Daniel she faced the infuriated mate.

"Stand back!" she commanded fiercely, and all heard the words but not the mere murmur which followed and which Smiling Dick noted— "For my sake—I pray you!"

"I obey," said he cheerfully. "I but sought to pay tribute to *El Sangre's* queen, and he ill repays the compliment."

"Then," said Red Daniel, pushing Teresa aside, while Père Labat watched keenly from the side of the sail-tent, "an that be your thought—why, 't shall never be said Red Dan was a churl at his own wedding-feast."

With the swift change of mood from hate to affection, or *vice versa*, which is characteristic of intoxication, he royally clapped his mate upon the shoulder, bade Teresa resume her throne and ordered the Royal Chamberlain, Beeve, to select from the loot whatever pleased the whole company of buccaneers as a tribute to their queen.

Here confusion and argument arose. Smiling Dick was for a magnificent necklace of matched pearls which had once graced another fair throat. Hairy's fancy was a heavy gold armlet which he opined would look well against Teresa's soft flesh. The gaunt, skinny pirate known as Swanky had found an elaborate bracelet crusted with jewels and claimed the privilege of placing it upon Teresa's wrist. When Beeve Blowhard, as the Royal Chamberlain, expressed an ambition to place with his own hand an ancient snake-ring upon her Majesty's finger, the whole band was struck with the idea and thereupon each claimed a privilege of some sort. At that Red Daniel developed the great idea.

"*Put 'em all on!*" he yelled.

There was a sudden rush upon Teresa. Her face paled; she shrank; but as Smiling Dick suddenly placed his body before her as a shield, she regained her courage and laughed.

"One at a time!" she said. "Here is a finger for you, Black Tom, and another for you, sir. Here! Take my wrist, but first slip on the armlet, Hairy. Ah—there! And the necklace, Dick. Slip it over my head, but careful of the crown! But, Beeve, it is too large, and 'tis a serpent. Well—upon the thumb, then. But what is this—my waist? There, then—fasten it. There!—that is enough! I grow heavy with treasure. No more!"

But the buccaneers were not satisfied. More ornaments were snatched from the pile. Yelling, laughing, quarreling and pushing, they crowded forward, insistent upon adding to the most fabulous wealth that ever decked one woman at one time. A frenzy seemed to have seized upon them. Only Smiling Dick's good-natured coercion and strong arm saved her from being hurt in the scrimmage for place of honor.

Red Daniel leaned heavily against a tree and guffawed drunkenly, while by the sail-tent Père Labat watched, heartsick for the failure of his office to mitigate the lot of Teresa la Luz, but admiring of her pluck which as yet rendered interference unnecessary and unwise. And in his heart the little priest registered a good mark to the credit of Smiling Dick.

When no more ornaments worthy of an honored place were forthcoming, the buccaneers fell back to view the effect. It was then that Père Labat had a good view of Teresa. Her face was pale, her breast heaving, but she was bravely holding the smile. Despite her obvious exhaustion she sat like a queen—with just a little mock air, perhaps, especially in the poise of the cutlas-scepter.

She was radiantly blazing with gold and jewels. Upon her brow gleamed the crown of some Indian princess, about her neck hung streams of strung jewels and golden coins. Her breast glittered with brooches and around her waist was clasped a band of gold placques, shining in savage splendor. Her arms, bare to the shoulders, were half-hidden within clasps and armlets that pressed in upon her fair, smooth flesh, and her ten fingers were massed with scintillating rings of ruby, pearl, sapphire, beryl, garnet and other myriad-hued stones.

Only Red Daniel saw an omission. He staggered forward with a chuckle. He seized upon one of the tied leather bags of sorted coin and with his sheath-knife ripped the fastening.

"Say what ye like," said he, "there be but one holy oil. 'Tis this!"

He inverted the little sack over Teresa's head. A shower of doubloons jingled about

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her head and trickled into her lap, fell to the ground and rolled among the débris of loot. It was the cue for another outburst. Despite Red Daniel's fury, not so much at the risk of the gold as at the usurpation of his idea and privilege, the buccaneers seized up the remaining sacks, cut them open and showered the contents over Teresa. Not content with this, as the loose gold accumulated around the throne they snatched up the doubloons in handfuls and tossed them in the air with yells of wild abandon.

It was Smiling Dick who, pretending to further the mad sport, hit upon an expedient to end it. Himself comparatively sober—only, alas, that he had the stronger head—he knew what would happen. He seized a man to his right and left, gripping them by the hands, and cried upon the others to join up and form a ring around the patient woman on the chest.

Red Daniel was again leaning against the tree, but at a shout from his mate, and vaguely sensing what was toward, he staggered forward and was even glad of the two strong hands that seized his and supported him. Then the mate yelled:

"Three times 'round, lads! Tune up, Beeve—tune up!"

The mad crew caught the idea at once. Next instant they were prancing around Teresa, and as they whirled in the endless chain they bawled in chorus the old ballad:

Three times 'round went our gallant ship,
And three times 'round went she,
Three times 'round went our gallant ship,
Then she sunk to the bottom of the sea!

It was peculiarly appropriate, for at the third round Red Daniel sank to the ground overcome with liquor and dizziness, and he refused to rise. He was presently sound asleep. Beeve Blowhard staggered to a tree and also slid to the ground, his hand clutching at his head. The other buccaneers, cursing Smiling Dick for a fool, went off for more rum. For some reason or other they did not come back. The mate, swaying slightly on his heels, turned to Teresa and said:

"Get ye to the tent, señora. Ye will be troubled no more—until the morrow at least."

Teresa rose and stood still for a moment, gazing with moist eyes of gratitude at the gallant but drunken buccaneer. He forestalled her expression of thanks with a queer laugh.

"Lady—señora—" said he, his wits struggling against an in-closing fog, "had I held myself in respect—as I do—all women—more's the fool—I should not—I should not be—as I be—*now!*"

He got the last word out with a jerk, then swayed and fell full length upon his face, and lay still among the débris of the barbecue and its amazing aftermath.

With a sob Teresa tore off and flung from her the crown, the necklaces, armlets and jeweled rings, and ran toward the sail-tent. Within, she sank to the ground and burst into bitter tears. A shadow appeared at the tent flap, but did not come further. Père Labat sighed and walked away through the belt of trees that fringed the southern beach.

At the shadowy edge of the belt he knelt down and prayed for a few minutes, then he rose and looked out to sea. The sun was in his eyes and at first he saw nothing there but a glittering expanse.

Then a dark speck upon the dancing waste became focused. He stared for a while before he thought he knew what it was—a raft of some sort, with a small strip of light-colored rag fluttering from a stick.

And there were two objects prostrate upon it, one of which, it seemed to the little priest, raised an arm once and then became as loglike as the other figure.

CHAPTER VII

And is that woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?
—*The Ancient Mariner.*

THERE was excitement aboard his Majesty's sloop-of-war, *Sea Foam*, which lay at anchor off Port Royal, Jamaica, that hot afternoon. The commander, Captain Hallock, had just received a document—bearing the royal seal and a gubernatorial signature—from the old capital, St. Jago de la Vega, or as the English conquerors renamed it—Spanish Town.

And now, as a result of the order contained in that document, the boatswain's pipe was shrilling, the pig-tailed tars were busy clearing the decks of all encumbrances. Among these were a score or more blacks who, at the sharp order to leave the warship on which they had disported for days, did not stand upon the order of their going but with good-natured shouts dived headforemost into the sea.

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H.M.S. *Sea Foam* had received sailing orders from Sir Thomas Modyford, in his person the king's Majesty in the colony of Jamaica.

Captain Hallock was pleased. The crew was glad. Even the little midshipman, Tommy Lee, had grown tired of the feverish harbor of Port Royal, tired of strange tropic fruits, broad-tongued laughing Africans, the occasional spectacle of a buccaneer hanging on Gallows Point. The whole ship's company was eager to put to sea again.

But none was openly or secretly more relieved than Lieutenant Bruce Coulter, the commander's right arm. When Hallock came down the deck with the order in his hand and followed by Midshipman Tommy—who in turn was followed by a pet monkey—Lieutenant Coulter was scanning the horizon away to the eastward through a glass that descried nothing but a filmy line where sky and sea merged.

"This should hearten you, Mr. Coulter," said the commander. "We are under orders from his Excellency to hunt for that which you seek. But no fears are entertained for her safety. It is but—Here is the order. Read it."

It was with feverish fingers that Bruce Coulter took the document with the broken real from his commander's hand. He unsolled it and read, under the British coat-of-arms, written from Spanish Town and addressed to the commander of H.M.S. *Sea Foam*.

You are hereby commanded to make sail and cruise to windward, proceeding as far west as Barbados, or until you discover the West India merchant ship, *Golden Fleece*, or ascertain its fate, and to render any needed assistance should it transpire that the said *Golden Fleece* suffered adverse fortune in the recent terrible hurricane. You are also hereby especially directed to inquire upon the welfare of Mistress Katharine Vernon, daughter of Colonel the Honourable James Vernon of his Majesty's Forces at Port Royal, the said lady having taken passage for Jamaica in the *Golden Fleece* and grave anxiety being entertained for her safety.

This was given under the hand and seal of Sir Thomas Modyford, whose anxiety for the fate of the *Golden Fleece*, in the opinion of Captain Hallock, might have another side to it.

"'Tis rumored," said the commander, chuckling, "from word brought by the packet, *Mary Queen*, a month ago that Sir Thomas is to be recalled in disgrace and that his Majesty hath acquitted Harry Morgan on the charge of piracy and even plans to dub him knight and make him governor of the island he once made his buccaneer quarters. 'Tis further said that the order of recall was to be expected by this same *Golden Fleece;* wherefore," added the naval commander with a deeper chuckle, "Sir Thomas's 'anxiety' for its safety."

But Lieutenant Coulter hardly heard. Like Colonel Vernon, commander of the military conquerors of the great island, his anxiety centered solely around Katharine Vernon. The *Golden Fleece*, in which she had sailed from England to rejoin her soldier father after some years of convent schooling, was nearly two weeks overdue at Jamaica. Under ordinary circumstances, with the uncertainty of a more or less three months' voyage, little anxiety would have been felt but for the terrific norther which had swept the Indies in the past week. And the lieutenant's anxiety was that of a lover, as the colonel's was that of a father. Both entertained the fear that the *Golden Fleece*, caught by the blast while among the myriad isles of the Windward group, had foundered or been driven ashore on some mere sandspit or, worse, some remote islet peopled by savages.

"I care nothing for what privately concerns Morgan, Modyford and, in this particular, King Charles," said the lieutenant, thrusting the document back into his commander's hands. "I am filled with a certainty—a presentiment, if you prefer—I saw it in a dream less than a week ago—that the *Golden Fleece* succumbed in the storm, that all went down with her save two women, one of them Katharine—Mistress Vernon."

"Cheer up, my boy," said the captain, relaxing formality and clapping a hand upon his junior's shoulder. "Dreams go the other way, and if not—why, she was saved—you saw it in the dream—and with her a companion-woman. If the dream be not stuff we shall find her and add to your affair a touch of old romance."

"When do we sail?" asked the lieutenant, suddenly bright and eager.

"'Tis but six bells," said Hallock. "The doctor still blows a headwind. 'Twill be calm in an hour and remain so until early in the second dog-watch; then with the land breeze we will have a fair draft for a straight course all night."

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As the captain had prophesied, the "doctor," as they call the breeze that blows from the sea all day in the West Indies, died out just as the first dog-watch was announced on the ship's bell. Thereafter for over two hours the harbor of Port Royal lay like a sullen mirror and the Caribbean right to the horizon was quiet as a sheltered pond. But the men of the *Sea Foam* were not idle. While the night insects of the mangrove forests skirting the great harbor lifted their first nocturnal chorus and Lieutenant Bruce Coulter paced the deck impatiently, the tars were getting all sail in readiness to hoist anchor and away with the first miasmatic breath of land-breeze from over the *vega* of Spanish Town and the swamps.

Once the lieutenant paused. All was ready. The sails hung exasperatingly idle. The men were smoking their pipes, exchanging speculations on the mission upon which they were about to sail, while some were quietly whistling to encourage the expected breeze. The moments were like hours to the lieutenant. From his breast he drew a small golden locket and in the faint dusklight studied two little miniatures within. One was a fair presentment of himself—a head with fair, close-cropped hair, a slightly curved nose, a firm mouth and a jaw that was in accord with steel-blue eyes.

The other little portrait was of Katharine Vernon—a queenly head with reddish-golden hair, a smooth white brow, most delicate nostrils and red lips that fitted each other in the lines of a perfect classic bow.

A chuckle sounded at the officer's elbow. He turned guiltily. The little midshipman, Tommy, stood there, at his heel the monkey which he had bought at Port of Spain and made his inseparable attachment.

"Please, Mr. Coulter! Let me see her!" said the lad with a teasing eye.

The lover yielded his dignity on the instant.

"Well?" said he, when the boy had studied the miniatures.

"It isn't a bit *like* you!" said the middy.

"Oh—never mind me. Of course it isn't. I mean—the other one?"

"Oh," said Tommy, as one presently comprehending. He turned his head from side to side, pursed his lips, frowned, shook his head doubtfully, then nodded in half approval.

"She's pretty," he allowed.

The monkey mounted to the boy's shoulder and reached a hairy paw for the locket, as if his opinion might be essential. The lieutenant rescued the precious trinket and himself again studied the fair face within, as if fearful of finding some flaw the midshipman's impartial eye had detected.

"My boy," said he in a whisper of confidential solemnity, "she is *beautiful!*"

The boy looked up with a sudden softening of his eyes. Bruce Coulter was to him as one of the gods.

"I was only teasing you, sir," said he. "She is somehow like my mother."

"God bless you, Tommy," said the lieutenant, "and please God we find her safe. Hullo! There's a bit of a smell from the swamps. Run aft, m'lad, and tell the captain, breeze is coming."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Five minutes later the tars were chanting at the capstan and the anchor was coming up from the coral bottom. A riffle appeared on the surface of the lagoon and the sea, died out and came again. Then the land-breeze set in gently but steadily. The chantey, "Oh, my Susie, how am I to go?" came to an end and his Majesty's sloop-of-war *Sea Foam* stole out to the open sea and headed away on her mission of search among the islands to windward.

IT WAS a strange thing, that dream of Katharine Vernon's betrothed, barely accountable even in cases where two souls have a common thought. For what Lieutenant Bruce Coulter of his Majesty's navy had seen in a dream had actually happened.

The *Golden Fleece*, a fine West Indiaman —one of the first of that great fleet which was presently to outrival the galleons of Spain—had been broken by the last straw after a voyage of successive head winds. But the last straw was the flail of a giant. The same norther which the *Black Spider* barely survived drove the merchantman upon the outer reefs of some island speck somewhere to the west of Barbados.

Whether there were other survivors Mistress Katharine Vernon did not know. She had a confused memory of a terrible night on a groaning, tortured ship, of masts and spars lying, like fallen logs amid jungle

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creepers, across the bulwarks, of a rending and crashing as the seas tore her timbers apart, of men shouting in the howling blackness, of rough but kindly hands lashing her and her maid—poor, terror-stricken Mary Appleyard—upon some hastily-put-together planks and then . . . .

No more the crashing and shouting, only the roar of the wind, the sullen drive of the sea, then the half-sleep of exhaustion.

Once—a long while later—she opened her eyes and found that gray daylight had dawned. There was no land in sight. The wind had abated but seemed to blow fitfully from all quarters. The sea was no longer a flat, white, driven thing. Under the lesser and fluctuating gale it tossed in mountainous, sickening waves.

Before she closed her eyes again in utter despair she noted that there was another beside herself and her maid. Mary Appleyard, tied to the planking of the crude raft, was either asleep, unconscious or dead. There was a water breaker near her, also made fast. Dimly Katharine became aware that there was a man—a common sailor in rags that hardly covered his nakedness—seated near her, riding the tossed raft without apparent difficulty and engaged in bending a strip of his shirt to an up-ended barrel stave.

Then Katharine fell asleep or became unconscious again. A second time she awoke—hours or days later; she had no means of judging the passage of time. The sea was still rushing past the raft or breaking over it with appalling fury. Still no land. The strip of shirt still fluttered from the up-ended stave, but the sailor had disappeared!

But a third time when she opened her eyes, the sea was quiet. A warm, gentle wind was blowing steadily from the south. The maid, Mary Appleyard, was stirring and Katharine knew that the girl had regained her senses, for she was weeping.

With some difficulty the mistress extricated herself from her lashings and, crawling to the maid's side, released the girl from hers. Then the two women, regardless of the gulf of social condition, sat together in each other's arms and wept for mutual consolation. Katharine Vernon's grief was not for herself, but for the father who awaited her at Port Royal, for the lover whose portrait lay in a little gold locket which was a replica of another.

The pangs of thirst aroused them to action. Katharine found that the breaker contained water, untainted by the sea. She unlashed the keg and the two women drank from it. Whether the mistake Katharine made was in careless handling of the spigot or in neglecting to lash the keg as she had found it, hours later she made the discovery that the keg had leaked more than three-fourths of its contents.

Then hunger added to the craving thirst. They shared the last of the water on the following morning. For hours they drifted on the ocean, the breeze steadily blowing them in a northwesterly direction. The sun rose in a cloudless sky and beat upon them with tropic violence where they lay exposed upon the raft. A drowsiness fell upon Katharine. The maid seemed already in a stupor of deep unnatural sleep.

Then it seemed that the end had come—the eternal drift!

FOR nearly two hours Père Labat watched the drifting speck upon the sunlit Caribbean. He had but thought to have seen a movement upon the raft, if that indeed was what it was. Since that fancy the objects on the floating wreckage had not moved. He could not even be sure that they were, or had been, human beings.

The object was still too far off for any action to be taken while the lusty arms that could have covered the wide distance lay helpless by their owners' sodden carcasses. For a few minutes the little priest considered the advisability of taking the *Black Spider's* one remaining boat, which had been repaired to temporary seaworthiness, and with the aid of the Señora Teresa, rowing out to investigate. It would distract the unhappy woman's mind to be of possible service to others. Later, if none of the buccaneers recovered in time, he would try this, but the boat was too heavy and his and Teresa's strength too slight to effect the task as yet.

The floating object came on slowly but steadily. Now with the naked eye Père Labat could see that it *was* a raft. The rag fluttering on the stick indicated that the objects lying near it were human beings in distress. He went back to the clearing, where the buccaneers were snoring loudly, and procured Red Daniel's brass telescope. Through this the little priest made a

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discovery that filled him with great dismay.

"Women!" he gasped, and he lowered the glass with a troubled frown. "'Twere unchristian to wish that they be dead, but——"

But—his duty was clear. They were women. They must be rescued, if rescue were possible and would avail. Again he thought of Teresa. Aye, it might be as well if he and the señora put off in the boat while the buccaneers still slept. Women!

The little priest picked up the skirts of his cassock and ran through the trees, across the clearing and to the sail-tent. He burst in upon the señora with his startling tidings.

"Heaven help them!" she said, commiseration in her eyes.

"Aye, no doubt Heaven will," said Père Labat cheerfully, "but Heaven may expect something of you and me, my daughter. It may be that Heaven sends *thee* this opportunity. It may be needful to hide these women. In any event they shall need the loving care of a sister in distress. Let us to the boat and launch it together."

But this was not easily done; not to be done at all by them. When they ran through the woods to the north beach where the *Black Spider* lay, they found the tide had returned considerably. The buccaneer ship was half afloat, but the boat which had been drawn high and dry for the repairing could not be budged by two pairs of arms, even of the strongest, for the craft was not only sunk in the dry sand but overturned.

It was then that Père Labat, baffled for the moment, turned the vials of his wrath upon the slumbering gallants in the clearing.

"The sodden swabs!" he snapped, wiping the perspiration from his heated face. "Now by all the saints, I shall make them cry *peccavi* for this circumstance! Bide ye here, my daughter, while I rouse the vermin with a length of my tongue. I would fain it could be accomplished otherwise, but accomplished it must be—and with their help, too!"

Leaving Teresa by the boat, Père Labat picked up his skirts and trotted back to the clearing where the buccaneers lay ranged around in all sorts of abandoned attitudes. Save for the chorus of stertorous snoring, it was as if there had been a pitched battle over a division of loot and these were the dead on the field.

Père Labat ran straight to Red Daniel where the chief lay flat on his back with the flies buzzing around his beard. The little priest delivered a sound kick on the buccaneer's ribs. *El Sangre* woke up with a gasp of pain and blinked stupidly at the *padre*, who was now hammering the soles of Smiling Dick's seaboots with the flat of a cutlas.

"Up! Up, ye drunken swine!" cried Labat, belaboring one man after another with the cutlas, or kicking him in the ribs. "Up and show ye be men when the rum is out, as ye are beasts when 'tis in! There be strangers coming ashore!"

At this last remark the buccaneers awoke with a will. Strangers! Coming ashore on the Isle of Avès! Perchance they wore blue jackets and white trousers, or epaulets and cocked hats! Strangers! Was it a king's ship? Was this more of Morgan's treachery? Had he revealed the island rendezvous of the Knights of the Caribbee?

"Nay, they be women," said Père Labat quietly.

At that, alarm gave way to curiosity. Led by the priest and Red Daniel they ran to the south beach whence the raft was now clearly visible in detail to the naked eye.

"Two women," said Red Daniel, and he cursed under his breath. He foresaw trouble, never suspecting for an instant that he, himself, would be the foremost maker of it.

"Send four pairs o' strong arms around to the boat on the other side," said Père Labat, assuming again a dictatorship. "Smiling Dick, you will captain the boat, and take the Señora Teresa, who is waiting by it. These women need her help. And that ye may save time, bring them to land here on the south beach. Lively, ye swabs!"

Smiling Dick, Hairy, Black Tom, Slumgullion and Swanky went off to the other side of the narrow promontory as ordered. Five minutes later the watchers on the south beach saw the boat round the eastern point of rocks. In it, besides the four rowers and Smiling Dick, was Teresa, kneeling in the bows.

The boat reached the raft and lingered a few minutes. Teresa was seen to peer over the bows at the prostrate women and then engage in rapid talk with the mate. A rope was made fast to the raft and the rowers bent to the oars, towing the wreckage ashore.

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It was a strange spectacle that the buccaneers looked upon as the raft came inshore. Both of the women were insensible. One of them, more humbly dressed than the other, was remarkably pretty. The other woman, whose reddish-golden hair trailed in the sea over the raft's edge, was at once of high degree and beautiful.

In the shallows Smiling Dick stepped waist-deep in the sea from the boat, picked up Mary Appleyard in his arms and waded ashore with her.

El Sangre, in the meantime, had been standing at the water's edge, staring oddly at the magnificent woman whose hair drifted at the edge of the raft like golden gulfweed. Suddenly he started and, without a word, waded into the sea and picked up Kathrine Vernon.

CHAPTER VIII

When neither Jack is in the wrong,
Nor Jerry in the right,
'Twere better gain to thrown a main
Than start a bloody fight.
—*The Curé of Caribbee.*

AT ONCE Père Labat's worst fear was heightened if not confirmed. If ever a man was suddenly smitten dumb by a beautiful face, it was *El Sangre* in that moment as he started to wade ashore with Katharine Vernon in his arms.

His eyes were fixed with rather an amazed light upon the delicate features, the half-parted lips, the white brow, the cloud of red-gold hair that lay in the hollow of his arm. Knee-deep in the surf he paused and stared down upon that lovely vision; then again he advanced and laid the still form upon the white sand, himself kneeling beside it and gazing with an odd abstraction.

Père Labat studied the buccaneer for a moment, then glanced toward Teresa, who had stepped from the stranded boat. She, too, had seen Red Daniel's action and the strange expression of his face. Her own turned pale and somber and she returned Père Labat's look with one of dull misery and resignation rather than resentment.

Momentarily the other buccaneers had been attracted by the first shore arrival in the arms of Smiling Dick. The handsome mate seemed proud of his prize and as if he had chosen the maid over the mistress to benefit with his personal protection. He laid her down upon the warm sand and stared admiringly into her pretty English face. The buccaneers crowded around, anxious for a glimpse of that rare—to them—sight, a real, white-and-red English wench.

"Lord, but she's a cure for sore eyes," said Beeve Blowhard.

"A sweet thing to look at!" declared Black Tom.

"Let's see the t'other one!" said Swanky.

At that the circle around the mate and the maid broke and the men gathered around Red Daniel and the other woman.

"Wot, ho!" cried Slumgullion with a whistle of surprise. "It's a lady—a real she-frigate!"

Red Daniel looked up with a glare.

"Get back, ye dogs!" he snarled, himself like a dog ready to dispute a bone.

Père Labat then took a turn in the game. He placed a hand on a shoulder to right and left of him and pushed his way through the circle.

"Aye—get back, ye rascals!" said he. "You, too, Daniel. This is work for thy wife, the Señora Teresa. Here, my daughter! Give your orders on behalf of these poor sisters."

"Take them both to my tent," said Teresa dully.

Red Daniel looked up at her and their eyes met momentarily. His, bloodshot and oddly fired, met hers with a kind of defiance. Teresa's held reproach more than anything else.

"Ye hear?" said Labat sharply. "You and Dick—as ye're so willing with your arms—carry them to the tent."

The buccaneer and his mate obeyed, Red Daniel still in that strange silence. Smiling Dick, however, chuckled joyously and said over his shoulder:

"Aye, aye, señora! And here's the hope ye may bring this one to, for I'm downright taken with her face."

The women were borne to the sail-tent and placed within. Katharine was laid upon a rough couch that had been prepared for Teresa; and quickly another was made for the maid, Mary Appleyard. Then Père Labat ordered Red Daniel and Smiling Dick from the tent, himself following and closing the flaps after him.

"Get ye about your business," said he quietly. "'Tis a woman's work."

El Sangre did not look at the little priest's

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eyes, but turned away with a curious willingness. Smiling Dick looked at the priest with a smile that was somehow pleasing.

"*Padre*," he whispered, "ye will see fair do?"

"God helping me—aye! And He will," said Père Labat simply.

As the mate went away, satisfied, the priest sat down near the entrance to the tent. Drawing a little book from the breast of his cassock he began to make some notes therein—notes that were to be a permanent record of what he termed in after years, "The Adventure of the Ladies."

Within the tent Teresa found herself alone with her two silent sisters. She gave but a passing glance at the maid, but stood erect and still for a little while gazing sullenly upon the calm, white face of the Englishwoman with the red-gold hair. Suddenly her eyes widened, then slowly narrowed and her breast heaved and sank in a deep emotion.

She knelt down by Katharine's side, opened the clothing about her bosom and slipped her hand beneath. The Englishwoman's heart still beat, faintly but steadily. She would live. . . She would live.

For a minute or two Teresa's hand remained still and her eyes again devoured—now with a gleam of jealousy—that fair face. She would live!

As the Spanish woman withdrew her hand it encountered a loose oval object which hung upon the other's soft bosom on a fine gold chain. With curiosity Teresa drew out the object. It was a locket. The same feminine impulse impelled her to open it. Within were two small miniatures, one of the woman who wore the locket, the other of a youth with close-cropped hair, fine features, a strong jaw and steel-blue eyes.

At sight of that masculine face, and at the thought of where she found it, the cloud left Teresa's face. She smiled, but the smile again melted into sadness.

"God have mercy upon her!" she breathed.

A few minutes later Père Labat saw Teresa emerge from the tent. She paid no heed to the priest, but walked to where Smiling Dick, having roused the buccaneers to activity and a semblance of renewed discipline, was directing the cleaning up of the débris of the debauch. Red Daniel was nowhere to be seen.

At Teresa's request Smiling Dick gave her food, wine and water.

Carrying these, the Spanish woman returned to the tent. A mixture of wine and water, judiciously applied, restored the two women to consciousness. In a little while they were sitting up and asking for more water. Teresa, without a word, gave them a little and pointed to the food. Katharine and her maid fell to with a gusto that was most unladylike.

When their first pangs had been alleviated and they were again resting upon the couches, Katharine turned her eyes upon Teresa, studied her for a little and asked:

"Who are you that are so kind? Surely we have fallen into good hands. Where are we?"

Teresa could not speak English, but she replied in French as an experiment. Katherine knew that language and repeated her questions in it.

"I am Teresa," said the woman. "I am the wife of *El Sangre*, the buccaneer. This is the Isle of Avès, upon which your raft drifted. We are three women alone among a half hundred men—and the priest, Père Labat."

"Buccaneers!—a priest!" said Katharine, puzzled at the incongruous coupling.

Teresa explained the situation. During her recital the maid, to whom the mistress passed on fragments of explanation, burst into tears.

"They will kill us, sweet mistress!" she sobbed.

"They will not kill you," said Teresa with a sad smile.

Katharine Vernon's face turned pale.

"But this priest?"

"He will save you if he can," said Teresa, "but—he is but one and this is the Isle of Avès where there is neither law nor power of religion. And if they drink——"

Teresa shrugged her shoulders with an air of pretended indifference. Katharine arose from the couch. She swayed slightly as she stood up, but managed to hold herself in erect dignity.

"My father is commander of his Majesty's forces at Port Royal," she said proudly. "The king's ships at Jamaica will surely search for me as soon as the fate of the *Golden Fleece* is established. I am not afraid.

"I would not tell them that," said Teresa calmly. "They do not love the king's

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ships, nor they that serve his Majesty. Take this," she added, drawing a fine stiletto with a jeweled hilt from somewhere about her person.

Katharine looked at the deadly blade and shrank a pace.

"Nay," she said. "I shall have no need of such a thing. 'Twould but invite force."

Teresa smiled and turned to the flaps of the tent. She drew and pinned them together with the sharp, thin blade and said simply—

"It may have other uses."

She almost immediately withdrew the dagger as the voice of Père Labat sounded without:

"Ah, señora," said the little priest cheerfully. "I hear voices. Your charges have recovered? When a woman's tongue can wag she is in a fair way to be herself. May I enter? And here is your lord and master and the mate would pay their respects to the newcomers."

Teresa glanced at the Englishwoman, who in turn glanced at her maid. Mary Appleyard cowered in the corner in terror, but Katharine, still standing erect, said:

"Let them enter. I would see them, and that they should see me."

The flaps were withdrawn. Père Labat entered, followed by Red Daniel and Smiling Dick. The two latter at once uncovered their heads and stood near the entrance, shuffling their feet. The presence of an Englishwoman of birth and refinement had a strange effect upon both of them. They acted like a pair of country churls finding themselves unexpectedly in the presence of a queen.

But Père Labat advanced with an easy grace and proffered the back of his hand with two words that had in them a curious authority.

"My daughter," said he quietly.

At sight of the black robe and the little silver cross, made suddenly confident by the thin, kindly face and the keen, honest eyes, Katharine relaxed all at once, dropped upon one knee and kissed the priest's hand. Mary Appleyard followed suit, while Père Labat smiled upon them both.

Teresa's eyes were upon *El Sangre* who, despite his momentary awkwardness, was again staring at the golden-haired Englishwoman, like one distrait or dreaming. Smiling Dick, on the other hand, was looking with frank admiration at the maid. Catching her eye, he grinned most attractively. Mary Appleyard somehow forgot her fears on the instant and favored him with a genuine smile, which set Dick to shuffling again.

"It pleases me to note a healthy recovery," said Père Labat, raising Mistress Katharine to her feet and bowing over her hand. "This," with a wave toward *El Sangre*, "is Daniel—Daniel—his sire name slips me for the nonce, but I assure ye, my daughter, he is no descendant of the prophet. And the other is Dick, a sorry rascal in's way but a good lad at heart. Your thanks to them for your rescue and their hospitality, which," with a quick glance at the buccaneers, "they will observe as becomes gentlemen of the sea. I am Père Labat, and this is Teresa, *la Señora del Sangre*. Advance, Daniel, and you, Dick, and pay your respects!"

Red Daniel came slowly forward, his eyes fixed curiously upon Mistress Katharine Vernon. She held out her hand. He stared at it, then suddenly seized and brought it impulsively to his lips. At the touch of his red beard Katharine winced perceptibly and quickly withdrew her hand. Thereafter, until the man was gone, she continued to watch him with an almost fearful expression which she tried vainly to conceal behind a polite smile.

Smiling Dick, on the other hand, quite forgot the respect he owed the mistress in his preoccupation with the maid. The swashbuckling dandy of the buccaneers was engaged in a low-toned, voluble discourse of some sort, addressed to Mary Appleyard, when Père Labat reminded him of his manners. As the mate made a low bow and remarked that he was dazzled for the moment by "the sudden shower of angels," Katharine laughed outright, and the atmosphere cleared.

Père Labat and the two buccaneer leaders presently retired, leaving Teresa and the two women together. The Spanish captive-wife looked steadily at Mistress Katharine and again proffered the jeweled dagger.

"You must rest," she said simply.

The Englishwoman looked into Teresa's eyes and slowly extended her hand.

"I thank you," she said in French, taking the weapon.

She remained standing with it in her hand after Teresa went out and her eyes

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were fixed anxiously upon the entrance of the tent. Her thought was broken in upon by a little laugh from the maid.

"Sweet mistress Katharine!" said Mary. "We have little to fear after all. It is a romance. Pray tell me, mistress, are all buccaneers so handsome and gallant?"

"Handsome? Gallant?" echoed Katharine in dismay. "The man—is a wild beast!"

"But, marry, I meant the other, sweet mistress. He hath a tongue like a French or an Irish. But he is from Kent, from near my own hamlet—he told me so—and I remind him of his little sister, he said."

Katharine turned from the tent flaps which she had quietly pinned together with the dagger and smiled sadly upon the suddenly exuberant maid.

"Had you told him you were from Gretna, 'twould have been the same, no doubt," she said. "Lie down and sleep, child, while you may. We are in the hands of God—and Père Labat."

They lay down together, on the one couch. Katharine was silent, and the maid, at first inclined to converse, awoke no response. Presently they both slept, mistress and maid locked in each other's arms, while in the same dusk that gathered in the clearing the sloop-of-war *Sea Foam* sped out from Port Royal lagoon to meet and convoy the *Golden Fleece* or find its survivors, if any.

SOME hours later Mistress Katharine Vernon stirred in her sleep and suddenly opened her eyes. For a moment she could not imagine where she was, her surroundings were so strange. It was if she had again wakened in half-delirium and gazed upon a blank sky shot with flashes of fire.

Then she remembered, but the appearance of the inner tent had changed. It was dark, but the sloping canvas glowed from without. Yellow light danced upon it, dimming one moment, brightening the next, as vague shadows came and went between the tent and the source of the flare.

Presently she became conscious of a dense shadow—the shadow of a crouching human figure—enlarged grotesquely by the fire beyond. The figure appeared to be listening and watching off to one side. Then its head turned and Katharine saw that the man crouching outside the tent was heavily bearded. The shadow silently moved around the tent and became lost in the darkness where the flare did not strike the canvas.

Her heart beating and her breath suspended, Katharine lay still, staring at the entrance. Presently there was a slight movement there. In the dim light she saw a hand groping between the interstices of the flaps. Now a hand and wrist were visible, the fingers feeling like antennæ for whatever fastened the flaps inside. Suddenly the fingers encountered the point of the dagger. The hand was withdrawn with a quick jerk and to Katharine's ears, as she arose quietly to her feet, came a muffled curse.

At the same moment the maid, aroused by her mistress's stirring, sat up and sleepily asked what was the matter and where they were.

"I shall see," said Katharine calmly. Despite her dread she went bravely to the entrance, extracted the stiletto and, holding the weapon tightly in her clenched right fist, quickly threw back the flaps.

There stood Père Labat, his eyes turned to the left and a sardonic smile on his face. Behind him—a few paces away—was Teresa, also looking to the left. Katharine's eyes followed the direction of their gaze and she saw Red Daniel walking toward the fire. He sucked one of his fingers, spat, and cursed softly.

"Was it you, Père Labat?" asked Katharine, concealing the dagger.

The little priest started slightly at sight of her in the tent opening; but he pulled himself together, laughed lightly and said:

"I thought to wake you, my daughters, for ye should ha' food and water at intervals. Here is Teresa, who will serve your needs. Best, though, that ye keep under cover," he added, lowering his voice to a grave note. "Our jolly robbers are carousing again."

He walked away into the shelter of the trees, whence he could watch, himself unseen, the movements of the buccaneers. Teresa entered the tent and set out more food and a little wine for her charges. After they had eaten moderately the three women sat in the half-light of the tent, silent but listening, the hearts of all three growing heavier as, from around an enormous bonfire in the middle of the clearing, the voices

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of the buccaneers again told of the broaching of the rum-cask.

From his vantage point among the trees Père Labat saw and heard everything. He had noted Red Daniel's curiosity about the fastening of the tent-flaps; and Red Daniel, after cutting his hand for his pains, had become aware of the little priest's eye upon him; also Teresa's.

El Sangre had returned to the fire. After quaffing a goblet of rum the buccaneer engaged in an earnest talk with Smiling Dick. The latter, Père Labat noted with regret, was also lapsing again from grace. The two buccaneers seemed to arrive at some easy agreement about the point they were discussing.

"If 'tis your choice, Daniel," said Smiling Dick heartily, clapping his chief on the shoulder, " 'tis no affair of mine, so that it's hands off the other."

A cold horror settled around the little priest's heart. The next move confirmed his suspicion of what was toward. Red Daniel gave a low whistle and gathered the buccaneers around him. His uncouth speech will not bear repeating, but in effect he laid the proposition before the crew that it had been agreed between him and the mate that the English beauty should fall to his lot as by the law of the buccaneers. Smiling Dick laid claim to the other.

Instantly there was an outburst among the buccaneers, among whom disicpline was again forgotten under the influence of renewed potations. They did not dispute *El Sangre's* right, but the rascal Swanky, who was something of a sea lawyer, maintained another interpretation of the law of the buccaneers; that while the fairer spoil should be a matter of division or settlement between the chief and his mate, the lesser spoil should fall to the crew and for settlement among them by what means they elected.

"The dice! The dice!" Black Tom suddenly yelled.

"Ye'll dice no dice for any woman while I can hew my way with a blade!" cried the mate, drawing his cutlas.

"Throw a main! Throw a main!" cried the backers of Black Tom, and it was presently forty against one, for Red Daniel, satisfied with the admission of his claim, hung in the wind and supported neither side.

But he was presently drawn into the quarrel, also. Some one at the back of the crowd, who was wise enough to keep himself concealed, shouted the name—

"Teresa!"

Instantly there was an uproar. Red Daniel should be out of it altogether. He was a wedded man, less than forty-eight hours a wedded man.

"Shame on ye, Daniel! 'Tis a disgrace!" howled the buccaneers, mirthful at the change in the situation.

For a moment Red Daniel was startled into sobriety and clear thinking. He foresaw complications. Like a wise leader he yielded—for the moment; and in the yielding he took sides with the buccaneers against Smiling Dick and the latter's secret desire to save the maid, Mary Appleyard.

"Then, by th' eternal soul o' me!" roared *El Sangre*, "there shall be no favor but fair do! The dice it shall be, b' th' Lord! We'll throw for both, winner to have the woman and second the maid. A single cold throw each and losers stand out. Fetch the bones, Blowhard!"

Under the trees Père Labat heard and his heart sickened. Within the tent Teresa heard and understood, as Katharine Vernon and her companion did not. And in the hot heart of her the Spanish woman took oath by the Virgin that sooner than this thing should be she would kill these women with her own merciful dagger.

CHAPTER IX

Her cheeks were red, her hair was golden,
Aye! Roll and go!
Her cheeks were red, her hair was golden,
Ho! Roll and go!

—*Chanteys of the Main.*

PÈRE LABAT went quietly to the tent and spoke to the women inside.

"My daughters," said he, "ye had best come out and show an indifferent demeanor, for an I make no mistake ye will be summoned soon, and 'tis best ye ha' some understanding of what is coming."

Presently the buccaneers, looking up from the dice-throwing which had been started, sent up a huzza at sight of the little group that appeared within the halo of the bonfire. They beheld Père Labat with Teresa on one side of him, Mistress Vernon on the other and the maid, Mary Appleyard, peeping from behind.

Smiling Dick, catching sight of the pretty

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English maid, waved a hand to her. She coquettishly signaled back. Semaphore communication thus established, Dick pointed to Red Daniel and another buccaneer who were making the first throws of a main. The mate spate on his hands and shook an imaginary box for luck. As Mary signaled a response, Katharine, reproved her, but Père Labat said:

"Nay, try to observe some such impish demeanor thyself, Mistress Katharine. Think of the fine compliment—that men should throw a main for thee as a prize worth winning."

Katharine laughed mirthlessly.

"There!" said the little priest. "That sounds better—at least to dull ears."

In the meantime, while the group looked on as if finding amusement and interest in the proceedings, Red Daniel was defeated in the first dice encounter with the mate. The chief was out of it. He took his defeat with a grace that was almost too good to be true. In a way he was glad to be out of the running. He preferred to attain his end less openly and watched shrewdly to note who might be the winner of the main. With him, whoever he might be, he could, and would, deal after the manner and method of *El Sangre.*

"Stay in and win, Dick!" said Red Daniel to his mate, as the latter bade fair to survive to the end of the main.

Near the finish of the dice-throwing all were out but four. They were Beeve Blowhard and Black Tom, Smiling Dick and the rascally buccaneer—in appearance at least—called Hairy. When fat Beeve won over Black Tom there was a shout of amusement, for the stout and sentimental Beeve stood fair to win the first prize, which struck the buccaneers as deliciously and grotesquely comical. Another cheer went up as Smiling Dick beat Hairy with four sixes. Hairy tried to throw the box and the bones into the bonfire with a curse, swearing that they had been meddled with.

And now Smiling Dick and Beeve Blowhard sat cross-legged opposite each other, ready to begin the final main. Père Labat felt relieved, as did Teresa, since Red Daniel was apparently out of the affair. Katharine Vernon looked on with a curl of genuine amusement about her lips, for she had no fear of Smiling Dick should he win the right to call himself her master. He would no doubt transfer his lordship to Mary Appleyard. As for Beeve and the equal possibility of his acquiring her as so much property, she hardly knew whether to laugh or feel humiliated.

As for Beeve himself, a hope that had been growing within him as he won main after main changed to a sudden terror as he found himself facing Smiling Dick for the final coup. All at once he discovered that he did not want to win. He would be satisfied with second place, for the maid, Mary, was a plain, sweet wench, quite within his comprehension of womanhood. But if he won? What under heaven would he, fat Beeve Blowhard, do with that tall, grave, calm-eyed, distant English lady? He was suddenly filled with a kind of fright.

"'Tis your throw first, Beeve!" said Dick. "A main!"

As Beeve juggled the bones he stared at his opponent opposite him, and in the fat buccaneer's eyes Smiling Dick suddenly read a message. One way or another the mate had been little anxious about the outcome, now that they were all out of the match but himself and Beeve. He could take care of Beeve whichever way the dice fell. But it was apparent in that instant that the fat man's eyes were pleading him to win, to cheat if need be, so that he, Beeve Blowhard, might have the second place which he really did not desire so much as to be relieved of the first place. But Smiling Dick had set his heart upon the maid.

Alas for the dignity of Mistress Katharine, neither of the gamblers wanted her! And the best of it was that the same skill which had brought these two to the final coup—the same skill which had perhaps enabled Red Daniel to drop out at the beginning—was now exercised to the limit to play a losing game.

Beeve, after much juggling, threw a mixture from which he set aside one ace. Next throw he turned up three treys and, hoping—or pretending to hope—for a fourth, put back the ace and threw—nothing further but a four and a six!

He shook his head mournfully as he passed the dice to Smiling Dick. The mate grinned, juggled the box and threw—three treys!

"There!" said he, while the buccaneers cheered.

Smiling Dick's heart sank, for he had not lost and it seemed with two more throws he must win. Fat Blowhard was elated

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and scarce concealed it. At least he could not win, unless . . . .

Beeve's elation abated somewhat as Smiling Dick carelessly threw and turned up nothing to count. The handsome buccaneer threw more carefully the third time and grinned his relief as again he turned up a worthless miscellany.

As he and Beeve looked meaningly at one another across the dice, Dick smiling, Beeve somewhat worried, the excitement was intense.

"Tie!" yelled the buccaneers. Tie! Throw over! Throw over! Follow your hand, Dick! No, it's Beeve's turn. No! Dick follows his hand, 'cording to rules. Roll 'em lads!"

Beeve groaned inwardly. Again the chances were even. Such a thing could hardly happen again. He distinctly felt the desired bad luck ooze out of him and saw himself attached to a cold, dignified lady quite beyond his comprehension or worthiness. He perspired.

But a faint hope returned as Smiling Dick, following his hand in the new main, turned up two fours. There was yet hope, and Dick looked a little worried. Yet the smiling buccaneer pretended to be all eagerness to win, not Mary, but her stately mistress.

"Come fours! Come fours! He cried and—threw another.

Smiling Dick stared at the three fours, and sighed heavily. His hand reached for them, pretending he thought them not good enough. Yet—just three little fours. But Beeve ceased to perspire.

Dick suddenly slapped the leather cup upside down on the ground, slowly raised the box and craned his neck at the two bones beneath. There was a deuce and—*another four!*

As the buccaneers howled with excitement, Dick groaned disappointedly, while Beeve reached for the dice with a grin of relief. Somebody struck up:

> Her cheeks were red, her hair was golden,
> Aye! Roll and go!

Others yelled for silence.

"Let the bones roll and go! Show us yer skill, Beeve!"

"Four fours to beat," said Beeve, "for a fair lady o' high degree. Now may good Fortune be on my side."

"Ye can do it, Beeve. Ye can do it!" said Dick encouragingly.

Beeve threw a pair of aces. His dismay was secret. He stared and was about to take them up in the pretended hope of doing better with the five dice at one throw. A roar of protest went up.

"Keep your aces, Beeve! Keep your aces, ye lubber!"

"Who's throwin' them dice!" Beeve demanded hotly. "Didn't I lick ye all? An' ye teach me my game?"

"Let him be! Play your own game, Beeve!"

Beeve took up the aces and threw again—the same two aces. The roar was redoubled and it had fury in it.

"Yah! There! Told ye so! Why didn't ye keep 'em? Ye'd had four. Keep yer aces! Keep yer aces, ye swab!"

Beeve kept them. In his heart, where he nursed a profound belief in the fickleness of fortune, he was confident that Dame Chance would punish him for flouting her hint in the first place. But he reckoned not with the double contrariness of the goddess. Perhaps she read deeper into his heart than he thought, for as he confidently turned up the dice for the last time, her invisible fingers performed a feat of legerdemain and—

There upon the bare ground, illumined by the firelight, lay *five aces!*

A mighty yell went up. Fat Beeve had won the fairest stake that had ever been played for. He was beside himself with embarrassment as the buccaneers crowded in and roared felicitations. Red Daniel, guffawing with delight both open and secret, forced his way into the circle and clapped the sentimental, soft-hearted lout on the back. But under cover of the acclamation he whispered:

"Good lad! Ye've played my game fine. Bear it in mind or b' th' eternal soul o' me, I'll wring your fat gizzard!"

"I'd sooner had the maid, anyway!" Smiling Dick was saying to his consolers with more truth than frankness.

Then all eyes turned upon the group that stood a little way apart, just within the halo of the bonfire. Père Labat was conversing quietly with the three women, drawing their attention apparently to the stars and the various constellations, a subject upon which he was versed and often entertaining.

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"Go ahead, Beeve!" cried the buccaneers. "Step up, Dick, and speak for yourself."

THE winners were thrust out in front of the crowd of buccaneers, who pressed behind, agape and eager for the rest of the comedy. The mate and fat Beeve advanced rather diffidently, but stopped short as Père Labat suddenly lowered a pair of keen eyes from the stars and fixed them upon Smiling Dick.

"Well? What would ye?" said he, sharply.

The two buccaneers who had been favored by chance shuffled uneasily. Suddenly Beeve Blowhard felt something thrust into his hand from behind. The man at his elbow was Red Daniel and the fat buccaneer knew by the feel of the thing in his fist that it was a fine chain, studded at intervals with hard, cold, round objects.

Red Daniel gave him a push. Beeve took one glance at the thing in his hand and his face brightened. He waddled forward somewhat bashfully and extended his right hand to Mistress Katharine Vernon. In it was a thick cord of woven gold fiber, studded six inches apart with a set rubies and diamonds.

Katharine stared at the thing and then, acting upon feminine curiosity, perhaps, took it in her own slender fingers and examined it, her eyes distending and brightening as she did so; for it was a magnificent bauble that was being offered her.

But all at once she shivered at a thought that occurred—the thought, perhaps, of the now cold bosom that had once heaved beneath this gorgeous piece of womanly vanity. She shuddered visibly and was about to drop the offering to the ground when she happened to raise her eyes. They became fixed, not upon Beeve Blowhard, who was shuffling and blushing like an overgrown bumpkin, but upon a red-bearded face just over his shoulder. It was Red Daniel and his eyes were upon her with an unholy glare of expectation.

A look of understanding and utter contempt flashed across Katharine's face. Her lips curved and her nostrils tightened. All at once she raised her white arm and flung the bauble right at that leering face. It struck *El Sangre* full in the mouth and one of the stones cut deeply into his upper lip.

"Well thought on, my daughter!" said Père Labat coolly, while Teresa's face betrayed a curious mingling of pain and relief, and pretty Mary Appleyard shrank fearfully behind her mistress, who stood erect in a pale but calm fury.

"And now," said Père Labat, "we may learn what is the meaning of this?"

Red Daniel needed no invitation. Stung in more ways than one, he leaped forward and delivered a statement of the case.

"By the law o' the buccaneers these two women are loot o' the sea!" he cried hotly. "By the law o' the buccaneers we ha' matched for them, and these be the winners —Blowhard and Dick. And I will trouble ye, Chaplain, to mind thine own affairs until such time, maybe, as ye may be called upon to perform a double wedding, if it please such as are concerned."

"Aye, aye," said Père Labat, coolly.

"*Padre*," put in Smiling Dick, "may I have a word?"

"As many as ye like, Dick, my son," said the little priest. "Words are but wind, and 't seems there's a gale brewing. I may even blow my own bellows anon!"

"'Tis this I would say!" cried Smiling Dick, and at his voice and manner Mary Appleyard took courage and crept smiling from behind her mistress. "Beeve here hath won the lady under the law o' the crew, and that sweet maid there hath fallen to me. Chaplain, ye know Beeve for an amiable lad and amenable to good influence. As for me, no saint as I grant ye, I ha' set my heart upon that maid from the moment I lifted her from the raft, and if it please her and you, *Padre*, we shall have an honest wedknot tied here and now!"

The buccaneers burst out in a mighty cheer. Even Red Daniel seemed pleased by the proposed solution. Let Beeve wed Mistress Vernon, too! It would be a jest to begin with.

In the meantime, Smiling Dick, filled with a sudden sense of his own virtues, stepped forward and seized Mary Appleyard by the hand. Instantly the smile left her face and terror succeeded. But she had all the pluck of an English maid and her disengaged hand suddenly came flat against the gallant mate's face with a resounding smack.

The buccaneers, who had aspired but been defeated, set up a howl of mirth at the discomfiture of Smiling Dick. It was a comic anti-climax to his heroic speech and action. The mate, staggered less by the slap than amazement, stepped back rubbing his

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cheek and muttering confusedly, while Mary Appleyard glared at him with maidenly indignation.

Katharine Vernon's mouth twitched as if she hardly contained her amusement, while Père Labat chuckled hugely. But presently he fixed his eyes sternly upon the buccaneers and began, as he had promised, to blow his own bellows.

"The maid hath answered for herself, 't seems!" said he; "and by that juicy sparkle on thy lip, Daniel, I take it ye ha' heard from the lady. But what manner o' swine are ye, either way? Two score o' braggarts throwing dice for a pair of helpless women whose very presence ought to shame ye an' inspire ye to at least a semblance o' decency while they are dependent upon thy gallantry!

"Were I of a mind to tell ye that this same lady is daughter to the commander of his Majesty's military forces at Port Royal, Jamaica, that the king's ships will surely seek her out and string ye up to dry on the gibbets, an ye ha' treated her other than she is deserving, ye might make a virtue of a necessity and preserve thy rum-pickled throats against a likely vengeance!

"But so only would I argue with you were ye dogs that were amenable to no other mandate or appeal. I make no such argument for the safety of these my daughters. I say that ye shall honor them as ye would your mothers and your sisters—though I fear me ye honored them little enough! Ye shall each serve them, as a squire o' dames should, while they are on this blessed isle and God and Père Labat are ever-present to remind ye what is due the little sisters of the Holy Mother.

"Ye shall respect them in word, look and act from this moment forth, or by all the saints that ever walked among men, by bell, book and candle, by Paradise, purgatory and hell's damnation, he shall find a flea in his ear who does otherwise!

"Ye hear me, Red Daniel, ye drunken cutthroat whom I hold in no more fear than the devil who spawned ye—and you, Smiling Dick, who might ha' been a gentleman as mayhap your father was—aye, ye hang your head, Dick—and you, Beeve Blowhard, ye fat lump o' sodden clay that any can mold to his liking for good or ill. And the rest o' ye—*look!*"

Père Labat suddenly pointed straight over his head to the tropic stars that were blinking brightly in the arc of blue sky above the clearing.

"Look up, ye poor lost souls!" he cried dramatically. "*Look up!*"

They obeyed, partly in curiosity, but mainly because he so commanded them. There was a sudden silence. A faint wind sighed among the trees and all at once there was nothing in the world but stars—stars, and they looked like numberless pure eyes, with lashes that drooped and lifted and drooped.

"Think ye not, my sons, that God and His host of angels are watching?" came the voice of Père Labat in a strange, soft whisper.

His magic held them in utter silence for a few moments longer. But the little priest was too wise to let it dispel of its own accord. He brought the buccaneers sharply to earth with a command.

"You that ha' won the privilege to cavalier these women," he said; "you, Dick, and you, Beeve Blowhard!—see to it that another tent is pitched hard by Señora Teresa's. They shall ha' privacy to begin with. What say ye, Smiling Dick?"

The mate, secretly rejoiced at Père Labat's proposal and anxious to redeem himself in the eyes of the girl upon whom his fancy had alighted, promptly approved.

"Aye, aye, Chaplain. Ye ha' the right of it!" said he. "And ye may look to me to back ye, though I doubt if the need will arise. And if that decent maid will but overlook my folly, I will even set to work with a lighter heart."

"And I, too, ma'am," said the distressed Beeve, bowing awkwardly before Katharine Vernon. "I be not fit even to say I be sorry."

"And what says the admirable Daniel?" cried Père Labat.

But *El Sangre* was nowhere to be seen. At this discovery the rest of the buccaneers yielded and scattered, many of them, it must be confessed, to add fresh liquid fuel to their dampened fires. And close to the rum-keg they found Red Daniel, drinking, muttering and cursing all things on earth, especially priests and females.

In an hour the tent was up and Katharine and her maid were escorted to it by Père Labat. Teresa shared the tent with them, and the smaller one which she had vacated was preempted by the little priest himself.

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He did not retire at once, however. For two hours he moved about the clearing, keeping an eye upon the buccaneers, who were steadily drinking themselves into oblivion for the night. When the last of them seemed to have dropped off to drunken sleep by the great fire, the *padre* went slowly back to the women's tent and stood at the entrance for a moment, smiling at the gleam of steel which revealed the fastening of the flaps from within.

Then, adding on his own account something that might make for greater security, he went off chuckling to his own tent and to undisturbed sleep.

It was about three o'clock in the morning, when the moon had risen and was shining faintly upon the clearing and the still figures of the buccaneers by the camp-fire, that the figure of a man crawled on hands and knees to the entrance of the tent.

Arrived there he stealthily arose to his feet, looked in the direction of the *padre's* shelter, then proceeded to examine the fastening of the canvas before him.

All at once he started and stared. A ray of moonlight fell gleaming upon an object that was suspended from a small stick stuck through the flaps of the sail-tent.

It was a silver cross depending upon a chain.

With a gasp of superstitious fear Red Daniel cringed, crossed himself feverishly and skulked back to his place by the fire.

Until the dawn came, the eyes of heaven continued to blink calmly, and the greater orb of the moon shone steadily upon the emblem of sanctuary.

CHAPTER X

Oh, sweet it was in Avès to hear the landward breeze,
Aswing with good tobacco in a net between the trees.

—*The Last Buccaneer.*

THE next morning dawned fresh and bright with delicate streaks of mist dispersing over the clearing and a heavy dew dripping musically from the palms.

The buccaneers awoke, drowsy and inclined to silence until they had eaten, but otherwise showing little evidences of the previous day's debauch. They had stomachs of seasoned leather and heads of cast-iron, and they were little troubled with nerves that they had never heard about.

For an hour Père Labat watched them anxiously from the shelter of his little sail-tent. Particularly he studied Red Daniel who, upon waking, sat for a while with his head in his hands, then arose with sudden decision, walked to the broached rum-keg and spilled its contents upon the ground.

"Well done, Daniel!" muttered Père Labat. "But Heaven only knows whether 'tis shame or discretion."

That it was more the latter did not take from Père Labat's satisfaction and the advantage to the women. *El Sangre* turned upon several of the buccaneers who, noting his act, entered a protest.

"Ye've had your barbecue," snarled the leader, "and now ye're done with it! Unless ye ha' thought to spend the rest of your days on this isle and raise hogs and yams, 'tis time ye turned to and set the brig to rights, so we may put to sea an we ha' need to in a hurry.

"Avès is no more a safe port for buccaneers," he went on, "since they made peace wi' Spain an' that swab Morgan gave himself up as a pirate. We be outlaws, every mother's son of us, and sooner or later the king's ships will swarm to our hive.

"Forby," he said, to clinch his argument for necessity, "an your ears were not as paralyzed as your legs yesternight the chaplain passed a word that will bear turning over. This lady is daughter to a high king's man and when word o' the wreck o' the *Golden Fleece* travels, they'll rake these islands with a fine comb to find if she escaped. So the rum's under hatches until the *Black Spider* is fit. Then we'll barbecue again, and to sea, where there's more leeway for them that have ticklish necks."

Not only did the buccaneers get to work on the *Black Spider* right after the morning meal, but as the day progressed and the effects of the debauch wore off, they again became what they were; a good-natured, if thoughtlessly wild crew, by no means lost to decency when in their sober senses. They were the men whose prowess had brought about the defeat of the Spanish tyrant of the Main, the men whose reckless fighting qualities had at last secured for England dominion of the Caribbees. They were proud of their record, and for that reason—and that only—did they resent their outlawry by political jugglery. They were declared pirates, high-sea robbers, and in their bitterness, especially when it was fired by rum, they preferred to survive

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as wolves rather than be slaughtered as black sheep.

And later in the day, while Red Daniel directed the work aboard the brigantine and the men heartily obeyed, lightening their labors with chanteys, Père Labat and the women appeared among them, somewhat nervous but outwardly smiling and confident.

"Good morning to you, Daniel," said Père Labat, cheerily.

He had noted the tipping of the rum-keg, but did not know of the little incident of the starlit cross. Yet he was quick to observe that Red Daniel did not look at Katharine and did not meet his own eye squarely. He suspected that something had occurred to sober *El Sangre*, but pretended that matters as he found them this morning were natural and as they should be.

"Good morning, Chaplain—and ladies," Red Daniel responded. "'Tis needful we have the brig to rights that we may put to sea again, so the señoras may come to Port Royal."

"Aye, aye, Daniel," said the little priest, pleased but none too confident of the permanence of *El Sangre's* sudden virtue, "and y'are under contract to land me there, too. I take this kindly, Daniel."

Still with his eyes averted, Daniel gruffly acknowledged the remark and began to roar instructions to his men. Père Labat, remarking that this was no place for women and preachers, glanced significantly at Teresa, Katharine and Mary Appleyard and drew them away from the scene of virtuous industry.

"What has happened?" asked Katharine Vernon, as soon as they were out of earshot. Teresa was looking at Père Labat with a puzzled frown, while Mary Appleyard was trying to single Smiling Dick from the ant-hill of the ship.

"Only that which has come under my observation many times in my dealing with the buccaneers," said Père Labat. "There is good gold in the worst dross of humanity, and these men, my daughter, are in some respects more sinned against than sinning though Heaven knows they are steeped enough.

"I know not, however, what they may do if a king's ship appears. They have but two courses—to fight or surrender to the king's mercy, and that, my daughters, is like to be exercised after they are dangling in the gibbet chains, even as he made peace with Philip *after* he had sent Morgan to Panama, so he could pocket the loot and declare these valiant warriors outlaw pirates. But I have a hope now that the time ye are destined to remain on this isle will not be altogether unhappy."

His prophecy was right to a certain extent, to a certain limit which was to be revealed.

While his Majesty's sloop, *Sea-Foam*, cruised among the islands to the south and west and east, seeking news of the *Golden Fleece* or her fate, and making particular inquiries after Colonel Vernon's daughter, life on the Isle of Avès settled down to a curious sort of idyl.

From sunup till noon the buccaneers worked hard upon the *Black Spider*, careening, repairing and removing from her hold a great deal of telltale matter. This was transported to the clearing for burial against exhumation at some more opportune time.

Then, after the midday meal, a general leisure and freedom was declared. And the devil found no mischief for idle hands, for the devil's inspiration, kegged, was strictly under lock and key. At first there was grumbling over the lack of rum, but as the days passed and the men began to look upon life on the gorgeous isle through eyes and senses undistorted by liquor, they resigned themselves to the situation—aye, even approved it.

But for the Jolly Roger which fluttered from the top of the tallest tree near the clearing in defiance of the king's edict against buccaneering—or, as it was now termed, "piracy,"—the Isle of Avès might have been some ocean elysium where a ship's company had had the fortune to be castaway.

And in the evenings, when the peril of idleness and the desire for convivial measures were greatest, the genius of Père Labat, with some aid from Smiling Dick and Mistress Katharine Vernon herself, made the camp-fire the most popular event of the day.

From the loot Smiling Dick had unearthed a Spanish bandolon, and he could play it, too. Under the stars and by the glare of the great fire in the clearing, its twanging accompanied many a rousing song and chorus. Sometimes the feet of the buccaneers became restless as Dick's fingers

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groped and strayed into a lilting fandango, and they would dance.

Queer dances these buccaneers had, with queerer names. There was the *marengo* and the *kalembi*, half-Spanish in grace, half-African in weirdness; and the clumsy limbs of the pirates developed strange contortions in them. Then there was another dance which was ever howled down when the ladies were present, the *roomba*, which, however, was danced with suppressed shrieks of mirth after the women had retired to the tents.

At first the ladies took no part in these dances, and in the singing only occasionally as a chorus moved them. But on the third night, Katharine, noting that Smiling Dick was deserving of an opportunity to shake a foot, which he declared to Mistress Appleyard he could do with the best, suddenly reached forward and took the bandolon from his hands. It was the first time she had revealed that she even knew the instrument.

The moment her fingers touched the strings Smiling Dick was covered with confusion. He realized that he, a novice, had been playing before an accomplished musician. But Katharine assured him that if he could dance as well as he played he might be satisfied.

"Aye, and better!" cried the gentleman-buccaneer, "an I have a fair enough partner," with a glance at the maid. "Can she dance, Mistress Vernon? She says nay."

"An you come from Kentshire," said Katharine with a twinkle, "you should even know."

As she said this she struck up an old English country air. Next minute the buccaneers were roaring their delight as Smiling Dick and Mary Appleyard tripped, cleeked, swung and cavorted in a quaint folk-dance of the Kent hop-fields.

Now that the ice was broken, there was more freedom between the buccaneers and their guests, freedom within respectful bounds. The delight of the rough fellows knew only these bounds when Père Labat, after criticizing the crudeness of the *kalembi* dance, offered to show them a superior step, which he had danced in his youth. The little priest, to the accompaniment of the bandolon in Katharine's hands, picked up his skirts and tripped in something that may have been a dance in his limber days but now resembled nothing so much as a turkey-cock on parade.

And when Père Labat sat down, panting, amid roars of applause, Katharine, whose fingers still strayed among the strings, suddenly began to sing, softly at first; but as the buccaneers became hushed, her voice swelled richly upon the stillness in a song by Ben Johnson.

It was not an old song then. Few if any of the buccaneers had ever heard it; but it appealed to them just as touchingly as it does today for all its moss. Beeve Blowhard, in whom sentiment was readily soluble into tears, sat there listening, his fat cheeks shedding pearls of emotion while she sang:

> Drink to me only with thine eyes,
> And I will pledge with mine.

But the strangest thing was the relationship, under the influence of Père Labat, existing between the women and the buccaneers. The latter respected the former with an awe which they might have maintained toward angels. In the presence of the women they carefully pruned their rough speech, and where one made a slip, ripping out a feeling oath, there were a dozen quick to shame him into confusion with a virtuous scowl.

And no effort to please was too little or too great in the service of these women. Like awkward country swains the buccaneers came, hat in hand, bowing and scraping, to offer a bunch of wild-flowers, or some curious tropic fruit. Katharine was almost hourly the recipient of some sort of jungle creature, all the way from a gorgeous butterfly to a parrot or a squirming chameleon.

After the second day, too, when Père Labat was satisfied that it was safe and that the best ends might be served by appearing to trust the buccaneers wholly, not even Katharine kept so aloof as to refuse converse with her devoted slaves, or even to stroll with them in the woods.

BETWEEN Beeve and Smiling Dick there grew up a curious rivalry, which added to the entertainment of the other buccaneers, who presently fell out and left the main cavaliering to these two. It came about in this way. Beeve, having won Mistress Katharine in the dice main, felt that he owed her complete service. He appointed himself her cavalier

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and protector. Katharine humored the fat, harmless buccaneer but allowed all service to be performed through her maid. Thus an intimacy grew between Mary Appleyard and the slow-witted Beeve, an intimacy not unmarred by serious fallings-out, for Beeve gave orders to the maid with regard to the treatment of his "private property" and Mary Appleyard disputed his authority.

Smiling Dick, noting this intimacy and its differences of opinion, began to think that Beeve was usurping personal rights with regard to the maid. Thereafter, when Mary went for a stroll, intent upon gathering cashews or *guineppes* for her mistress, both Beeve and the mate accompanied her, the fat buccaneer as privileged servant, Smiling Dick to see that he did his duty by the mistress only.

Yet Beeve, as the days passed, developed a desire to please the maid also; and a comedy was the result, a comedy which kept the other buccaneers convulsed half the time.

For instance, one day Mary Appleyard, spying a delicate orchid in the crotch of a tree, high up, demanded its possession. Beeve and Dick immediately rushed to the trunk and there fell into a dispute while the coquettish maid waited demurely for her orchid. Suddenly Smiling Dick resigned the honor to fat Beeve and drew back chuckling.

Beeve started to ascend the tree-trunk, climbing three arm-lengths and slipping back two. Half-way up the trunk, still desperately laboring, he turned a perspiring, red face upon the couple below. He was so staggered to behold Smiling Dick with his hand upon Mary's shoulder and talking earnestly to her that he lost his grip and came to the ground with a heavy thud.

At Dick's loud laughter Beeve challenged him to do better, whereupon the mate shinnied up the tree, plucked the orchid and, clinging with his legs, sailor fashion, to the trunk, turned to wave his triumph. To his astonishment he beheld fat Beeve and winsome Mary with their backs to him and strolling away into the jungle as unconcernedly as if he did not exist. He did not see them again for hours and then Mary met him with a mere smile and said—

"And, pray, sir did you get my orchid?"

But Dick scored over Beeve when with the aid of some canvas and rope and a needle and thread, he constructed a hammock for Mary Appleyard. He did the work in secret and Mary knew nothing about it until Dick invited her to come and behold the surprise. She clapped her hands as he brought her into a bower of young palms and showed her the hammock swung between two older stems. She said she was sure her mistress would be very pleased!

"But, respecting thy mistress greatly," said Dick, "'tis for thee, Mary."

"For me, Dick?"

"Aye, lass," said the buccaneer, taking off his hat and gently grasping one of her hands. "For thee," he repeated earnestly, "as all that I have, or ever will have, is for thee, lass."

"Are you sure it is strong enough to bear me?" said Mary, trying her weight upon the hammock.

"Aye, strong enough for two," said Dick, showing her proof of his words. "If I do wrong, lass, to speak to thee—as I would, think no ill of me. I am a rough sinner, but I would do better, and mayhap I ha' connections in Kentshire that would welcome me back home and set me up in a little house with ducks and sheep and maybe a cow and an acre or two. Mary, lass, I speak to ye in all honor. When we come to Port Royal I would seek a pardon from the king's governor, and surely he would not refuse it an' you were to be my wife, and—and——"

Just what happened after that Père Labat never set down in his memoirs, but he must have been listening, the dear rascal, for he records that about this time he went off alone into the jungle and, kneeling under a branching Santa Maria, or redwood, said a prayer for Smiling Dick and Mary Appleyard and asked God to soften the heart of the king's governor, Sir Thomas Modyford, and all frigate captains and hangmen committed to his orders.

Whether Dick and Mary succeeded in keeping their delicate secret, news of the hammock spread among the buccaneers. Presently other hammocks appeared all about the glade and in cosy corners of the wood. It was a common sight to see Red Daniel sprawling in one of these, with Teresa fanning him and whisking the flies from his bearded face with a little palm frond. And Smiling Dick would be in another, smoking and sulking, perhaps, because his mistress, the maid, had invited Beeve to partake of the very hammock love had made for her and would now be engaged in flirting with

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the fat man and fanning him with a bit of plantain leaf.

Red Daniel, in the meantime, had a hammock made specially for Mistress Katharine. He sent word of it by Black Tom and did not himself come near her. She sent back her word of thanks and he had the satisfaction of seeing her one afternoon asleep in it. He stood quite close to her behind a tree and studied her beautiful face, noting the exquisite delicacy of her lashes lying in slumber above her rose-tinted cheeks and the slow rise and fall of her bosom at the base of a round, white throat. And the sea-breeze played mischievously with a tendril of hair beside her small ear.

It was ten minutes after this vision that *El Sangre* violated his own edict. He went to the treasure-chest, which still stood in the clearing, and took from it by stealth a black bottle. This he carried with him into the north belt of trees. There, after drinking deeply from it, he hid the bottle among the leaves and went away, only to return in a little while to quench his growing thirst, the thirst for more that is a peculiarity of waters alcoholic.

Later that afternoon Katharine Vernon awoke in the hammock with a sense of being stared at. She looked around, but saw nothing that would account for the curious instinctive alarm that was speeding through her nerves. The hammock was hidden in a shadowy nook of the palm grove, open only on the side facing the Caribbean to the south.

She was about to rise and seek the more populous clearing when Red Daniel stepped from behind the trunk of a coconut tree. At a glance she knew he had been drinking. His face was flushed, the beard about his restless lips slightly wet, and his eyes were aflame.

"What is it?" she said calmly enough. "I have been asleep."

"Aye, and a bonny picture ye made," said *El Sangre* with a curious laugh and a sudden swallow. "Mistress Kate," he added thickly, "ye are a fine wench. Y'are fit to be a king's wife—or a strong *man's!*"

Katharine arose to her feet, pale but still calm.

"I do not understand, sir," she said, beginning to move past him.

But he stepped in front of her and leered in what he may have thought a conciliating smile.

"Ye take me well enough!" he said. "'Tis but that a woman must fence."

"I think I take your meaning," said Katharine quietly; "and I have need to fence, have I not? But you have been drinking, else from what I have noted of you in these last days, you would act otherwise. I shall forget what you have said. I shall not tell Père Labat, nor the Señora Teresa——"

At that the buccaneer threw all caution to the winds.

"That —— chaplain!" he snarled. "That whining doll-woman! 'Tis they, between them, stand between me and what I want and will rip up hell to have and to hold! That's you, m' beauty—the finest frigate ever spread canvas! 'Twas that hatchet-faced priest tied me agin my will to yon she-raven. But this is Avès and here am I—king, law, church—what I please! and by th' eternal soul o' me——"

She stopped him short by merely raising her hand and staring into his fired eyes, her own burning with a cold fire. At the same time there came a shouting from the south beach and the clearing.

"Before it is too late, Red Daniel," said Katharine Vernon, "look over your shoulder."

He did. He burst out in a terrible stream of profanity. Then, after a quick, baffled, vengeful glare at the woman of his gross infatuation, he turned and ran with a slight unsteadiness toward the clearing, shouting as he went:

"Dick! Hairy! Black Tom! Down wi' that Jolly Roger! Down wi't! Strike it—lively!"

As he disappeared, the shouting in the clearing became louder and Katharine saw the figure of a man clambering among the branches of the tree which bore the damning flag at its peak. She heaved a deep sigh, clasped her hands and closed her eyes in a silent prayer of relief and thankfulness. But suddenly she looked again, fearful that that part of it all was a dream to which a a fervent hope had been father.

But it was real and true! There had burst upon the open expanse of the Caribbean, seeming to shoot like magic from behind the pile of rocks to the eastern end of the island, a sloop-of-war with the red cross of England blowing at her peak.

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CHAPTER XI

Port Royal's creakin' gibbet chains
Are leagues across the sea,
If the wind will hold, we'll hide the gold,
And to hell wi' the king's navee!
—*Blackbeard's Toast.*

CAPTAIN HALLOCK, of H.M.S. *Sea Foam*, lowered the glass from his eye and turned to Lieutenant Bruce Coulter.

"Yes," said he, as if he wished it otherwise, "there are women there—two, at least."

The young lieutenant turned visibly pale under the bronze of sun-tan.

"You don't believe—?" he began.

His voice, hoarse, suddenly died off in a soundless whisper. But Hallock understood.

"Unless by any chance," he said, "we have found the needle in the haystack; which is very unlikely. I should be sorry, Bruce, if your hopes——"

"Hopes!" the lieutenant interrupted, finding his voice almost explosively. "If I have any hope it is that this Avès be the last place where I find—*her!*"

"Well, it is written—one way or another," said Hallock, philosophically. "We can only do our duty as it comes before us."

As the commander of the *Sea Foam* turned and gave a few orders to his men, and preparations were made to heave to and lower a couple of boats, Lieutenant Coulter leveled the glass upon the island and the people the king's ship had suddenly discovered there.

"There goes the Jolly Roger!" said Hallock across the deck. "So they mean to take to the woods? But we'll smoke 'em out. Poor fools! They'd profit better by surrender, as matters stand since the peace."

Through the glass Lieutenant Coulter, whose eyes were for the isle more than his ears for his commander's commentary, saw a movement at the tip of a tall tree behind the white beach. An arm appeared from among the foliage high up and suddenly the Skull and Crossbones, which the pirates had made their insignia since their right to the Union Jack had been denied, was whisked out of sight.

The eye of the telescope moved down the tree to where the base was lost in the masses of jungle foliage which precluded any view of the clearing from the open sea. The telescope moved along the front of the belt of trees. Once Bruce Coulter thought he saw shadows moving rapidly among the greenery, but these might have been the effects of the breeze and the sunlight. Then the slow sweep of the telescope was halted. A faint ejaculation broke from the lieutenant's lips and he hastily summoned the commander.

"There is a woman—*there!*" said he, pointing with scarce repressed excitement. "She is standing at the edge of the trees, her eyes shaded, looking toward us, and, captain, I swear I—it is——"

"Easy, lad—easy!" Hallock cautioned. "Don't let fancy take the helm. Let me see."

He swept the beach and the edge of the tree-belt for nearly a minute, then lowered the glass with a compassionate look at Coulter.

"I fail to pick her up," said he. "Still, I saw women at the outset, so you may not have been mistaken."

The lieutenant almost snatched the glass from the commander's hand and again leveled it at the isle. Where he had thought to have seen a woman standing with shaded eyes, he now beheld nothing but foliage and, between two coconut stems, a canvas hammock swinging idly in the light sea-breeze. He drew the captain's attention to the hammock and Hallock studied the object with deepening interest.

"It's a new-made hammock," he mused. "And if there was a woman in it, 'tis hardly like to have been one of that rascally crew's wenches. They don't pamper *them*."

He was about to express his conclusion to the lieutenant when he remembered that if indeed the woman the *Sea Foam* sought was there, it would not add to the lieutenant's peace of mind to tell him so.

"In any event," said he carefully, "we must smoke out that nest of hornets. Take two boats, Lieutenant, and you command. Midshipman Lee can take charge of the other. We must give the lad a chance to smell powder sooner or later. Take care of him, Coulter. He's still an infant."

Midshipman Tommy was overwhelmed with pride when he was informed of his appointment to the shore-going party. For him, as for every soul aboard, the past week had been one of maddening monotony and disappointment. They had cruised hither and thither to the eastward of Jamaica, Santo Domingo and among the myriad

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islets, without a single clue to the fate or whereabouts of the missing *Golden Fleece*. Once only they had discovered some floating wreckage which might or might not have belonged to an ill-starred merchantman, but which of the many in the Caribbean trade they had no means of telling.

At last the *Sea Foam*, working northward, had touched at Los Santos and there learned something of the visit of Red Daniel, the kidnaping of the priest, Père Labat, and the disappearance of the *Black Spider* to the southward.

"A high-handed bit of work," the commander of the *Sea Foam* had remarked to his lieutenant. "Methinks, Coulter, it would do no harm to visit Avès. If Red Dan and his rascals survived the hurricane they would naturally make for the old reñdezvous. Under the new edict against piracy, we should clean them out."

It was thus the *Sea Foam*, sailing upon Avès, stumbled upon the needle which they had been looking for in the Caribbean bottle of hay. But for that Jolly Roger flying from the tall tree the sloop-of-war might have passed by after a cursory examination, for the camping-ground of the buccaneers was invisible from the sea and the island presented an innocent, primeval appearance.

Closer examination had revealed, snugly stranded, or moored—it was not yet clear which—under the shadow of the eastern pile of rocks, the familiar black hull of Red Daniel's *Black Spider*, which in other days had been entitled to the *Sea Foam's* salute, when the buccaneer was a member of the authorized free-lance squadron of which Morgan was admiral in his flag-ship, *Revenge*.

This was about three bells in the afternoon watch. The buccaneers had abandoned work for the day and were at leisure on the south side of the isle. The *Black Spider* was deserted; the whole north shore was deserted; only the presence of the brigantine and that black flag fluttering over the jungle told the story of the nest in umbrage.

Then Captain Hallock had seen the flutter of a skirt as the *Sea Foam* rounded the eastern end of the island, and it was then that he gave the order to shorten sail, preparatory to heaving to and sending two boatloads of armed men to raid the pirate rendezvous.

While the men, armed with muskets and cutlases, piled over the side and Lieutenant Coulter and Midshipman Lee took their places, the guns of the *Sea Foam* were trained upon the beach as protection to the landing party.

IN the clearing, there was the utmost confusion; but presently it was apparent that this confusion was activity toward one end—the covering up of the buccaneer's tracks. The moment the Jolly Roger was snatched from the tree-top, Red Daniel breathed more easily.

"She may not ha' spied it!" he whispered tensely, although he might as well have roared in his accustomed manner. "Yon king's ship may but cruise around and make off again. But an' they make a landing we ha' but three courses—to fight, or surrender, or do neither, but cover up every sign o' recent occupation and take to the bush till they're satisfied there's nought but parrots on the isle. Lively now, lads! Clear away!"

The men caught his idea at once and fell to work rapidly, silently. Whatever course Red Daniel decided upon—and it was for him to decide by the law of the buccaneers—time would be saved, and much else perhaps, by concealing every trace of their presence on the island.

Most of the merchandise and loot, including four other chests, brought from the *Black Spider* preparatory to repairing her, had already been buried. The greater part of the work on the brigantine had been completed. Only remained the tents, the fresh-cut logs for the camp-fire, the charred remains of the fire itself and Red Daniel's private treasure-chest which had remained unburied in the center of the clearing as the best way of keeping it under a jealous eye.

While the men spread dry leaves and sand over the black circle of the camp-fire and others carried the cut fuel back into the woods and hid it in the undergrowth, two others dug a hole at Red Daniel's order in a patch of loose sand at the edge of the clearing nearest the south beach. Here, in the shadow of the trees, there was no turf. The sand was as fine and dry as powder. Once the treasure chest was buried and the sand spread over it, only chance could detect that the white surface had recently been disturbed.

Red Daniel cast an anxious eye around

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and it fell upon the two sail-tents occupied by the women and Père Labat. As he ordered several of the buccaneers to strike them, hide the canvas in the brush and order the priest and the women into the jungle "for safety," *El Sangre* called Smiling Dick.

The mate had been standing to one side, pretending to superintend the activities, but actually lost in profound speculation. He started and stared blankly for a moment when Red Daniel asked sharply:

"How is the brig, Mate? An we are forced to't, could we put to sea after dark, which will be on us in less'n three hours?"

"She's seaworthy," said Dick, after pulling himself together, "and would at least float. The tide is coming right and, given a breeze and the king's ship missed us, we might even steal away to leeward. But 'tis a large chance, and if discovered—as is more than like—we'd be sent to Davy Jones before there was even moon enough to glint on a gunsight."

"It's that or surrender if they find we are on the isle and we can't match them," said Red Daniel.

Smiling Dick was again deep in speculation. All at once he woke up, turned upon *El Sangre* and pounded his right fist into his left palm.

"Daniel," said he, "there be men of pluck who are sometimes fools in their pride. We stand to lose every way but one, and that is to surrender, claiming the right to lay down our arms as late privateers against the Spanish Don. 'Tis a fair argument and——"

"Surrender!" snarled the buccaneer leader. "Is thy neck so ticklish ye invite a rope to scratch it? Surrender, quoth he! By th' eternal soul o' me, 'twould be short shrift for the lot of us. 'Tis nothing less than a buccaneer crew the king's governor thirsts for, to hang in the chains as a sop to yon Spanish king that is still grousing o'er the Panama trick. Surrender an' be damnèd, say I! *Fight*, say I! Better a ball o' lead or a yard o' steel than a taut cord and a *padre's* blessing."

"Blessing, did ye say, Daniel?" said a voice at the buccaneer's elbow. "And the *padre*? Here I be, and both at your service."

It was Père Labat. He had been asleep in the little sail-tent when routed out by the news of the *Sea Foam* and the necessity for striking camp. Behind him at a little distance were Señora Teresa and Mary Appleyard, and these two were presently joined by Katharine Vernon, who quickly informed them of what was toward.

Mary Appleyard was in the seventh heaven of delight at the news. She looked toward Smiling Dick with a great hope in her eyes; but the look he returned her was full of anxiety and doubt, which puzzled the maid. Teresa seemed also troubled. Her great dark eyes turned to Red Daniel with a kind of curious solicitude. Was it for herself, or him? Katharine Vernon was pale and not yet recovered from the shock of the peril from which she had barely escaped. It was to her, in her inmost soul, as if Providence had mercifully entered with a protecting sword, although as yet she was far from realizing how far Fate had wrought to her advantage.

"Tut, tut!" said Père Labat, glancing around.

The clearing already looked as innocent of recent occupation as it could have done had the busy buccaneers not still swarmed around. Now the men, their tasks for the moment accomplished, grouped in a deep circle around *El Sangre*, his mate and the little priest. Somehow, in this moment of peril, the pirates turned anxious eyes more upon the little priest than upon their redoubtable chief. In Père Labat, possibly, lay the secret of salvation.

Even as the swift conference began, the buccaneer, Black Tom, ran in from the south belt of trees with the news that two boatloads of armed men were putting off from the king's ship.

"Then we must talk and act lively!" said Red Daniel. "I say leave no tracks and take to the bush, and if we be discovered, fight it out! What say ye, m'lads!"

"Aye, aye!" interrupted Père Labat, before the men could say aye or no. " 'Tis a very fine plan and becoming your situation mayhap. But is it that ye expect me, a plain righteous man, stained with no more than the average human sinfulness to hide like a hunted hare in these woods from a king's ship that hath hitherto paid me respect and honor? Is it that these women, who have sinned none but been somewhat sinned against, are to suffer the hardship of flight in the jungle to save your manly necks when this very ship is that for which I and they ha' prayed night and day? By all the saints in the church calendar! Ye must

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ha' wooden heads and sand in your eyes!"

"What would ye, priest?" Red Daniel countered furiously. "Are all our necks to stretch for you and a pair o' women—for Teresa stands by me as a wife should—and ye will not deny that, you that made her so? Ha' done wi' talk! What say ye, lads? Hide and fight if need be, or surrender and leave it to the pleasure o' the king's commander or his governor whether or no we shall adorn a yard arm or a gibbet?"

The men became excited, Red Daniel had put the matter very adroitly. But again Père Labat cut in before they had a chance to commit themselves to definite decision.

"Hide and fight an' ye will!" he cried. "But these two women go with me presently to the beach and make ourselves known. Trust me that no word shall be given as to whether you are here, and maybe 'twould be but a mild deception to say ye were gone elsewhere, if so be ye are no longer where you are.

"But 'tis a fool's scheme! Ye are *buccaneers*. Ye are not *pirates*, save by the circumstance of politics. I ha' but knowledge o' two unlawful acts; that ye coerced the people of Los Santos into delivering ye food and that ye kidnaped a priest of the church. For the former ye have the plea of necessity, which I can bear out, and for the latter, I may be moved to say that *I was party to it* for that your necessity was human.

"For the rest, ye sought refuge here in this isle which, until lately, was given over to your kind and unmolested. Here drifted the raft with these two women, one of whom I suspect that king's ship now seeks. And who shall gainsay the word of Père Labat —whom Heaven forgive—and the ladies themselves, that ye treated them as became gentlemen-knights of the Caribbee!"

"By Harry!" exclaimed Smiling Dick, who had been groping for just some such solution of the situation. "The chaplain is right. 'Tis the only way out. I stand by the chaplain. Who's with me?"

As he spoke he stepped over to Père Labat's side and looked over the faces of the buccaneers. Beeve Blowhard was shuffling his feet, but casting fearful glances at the scowling Red Daniel.

"Stand over, Beeve!" commanded Smiling Dick, and Beeve obeyed, carefully avoiding *El Sangre's* vengeful glare.

"What say ye, lads?" cried Smiling Dick to the others.

The circle suddenly broke, some of the men, among them Swanky and Hairy, coming to the side of the priest and the mate; others, including Slumgullion and Black Tom, siding with Red Daniel. There were a few left swithering, but when Katharine Vernon, followed by Mary Appleyard, suddenly came forward and stood beside the priest, these men, prompted by some impulse, swung the balance to Père Labat's side.

Only Teresa was left standing alone, her desire urging her one way, her duty and perhaps a half-formed tenderness for the man whose name she bore, pulling her another. She looked helplessly from Père Labat to *El Sangre*, then suddenly covered her face with her hands and wept in sheer despair.

"Shame on ye, Daniel! Ye see how it is with her?" cried the little priest. "For her sake, be a man and swallow thy pill, be it bitter or sweet!"

"Curse thy wheedling tongue, Labat!" snarled the buccaneer. "'T seems y'are master here! Well do thy cleverest, priest. An ye fail us with that same gift o' the gab, may my shadow on the gallows haunt ye!"

With that he shrugged his shoulders as if he yielded the dictatorship.

"They're nigh to the beach!" hissed a voice from the belt of trees.

"Leave it to me, then," said Père Labat, pulling a kerchief from the breast of his cassock and swiftly fastening it to a short stick. "Smiling Dick and you, Beeve Blowhard, remain here in the clearing with the women. Daniel, take your men and keep within the belt of trees while I forth and parley with the king's men. God helping me, there shall be no blood spilled, for I give ye my word I will tickle the commander's ear with a fine feather."

At that he picked up his cassock skirt, marched across the clearing, through the belt of trees and down the south beach, waving as he went the little flag of truce.

But the moment he was gone Red Daniel again asserted himself.

"Bring the muskets and load them," he commanded. "See to the priming o' the pistols and keep your cutlases loose, m'lads. The chaplain speaks fair enough, but I trust no king's men; and if they come armed we will even meet them armed, at least until we hear their terms."

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Then the buccaneers, ready for battle if the necessity arose, crept into the shade of the tree-belt and lay down facing the beach and the boat which presently grounded in the surf.

Back in the clearing the three women waited with Smiling Dick and Beeve Blowhard, the women with mingled hope and doubt in their hearts, the mate with a grave mistrust of his chief.

Red Daniel saw the king's officer step ashore and his men after him. He saw Lieutenant Coulter hold converse with the Père Labat, who talked rapidly and convincingly to all appearances, for the *Sea Foam's* men presently dropped their belligerent attitude and grouped around the little priest, fascinated by his story.

The temptation was too great for *El Sangre* when he beheld this convenient grouping.

"Ho lads!" he whispered. "Now we ha' them! Show them we are ready and have the advantage. Aim high, for I fear to hit the priest—and fire at the word."

A VOLLEY burst forth from the belt of trees. At the echoing roar flocks of parrots rose screaming from the jungle and the hopes of the three women and Smiling Dick expired on the instant. Père Labat broke off his speech to the lieutenant and stared at the wood's edge like a man suddenly bereft of comprehension.

"Now may God forgive them!" he gasped when he realized what had happened. "Lieutenant, do your duty. I have failed. The matter is now beyond my province."

"Stand by, m'lads!" cried Lieutenant Coulter, drawing his sword. "Spread out there to advance in open order!" The men fell into a wide-spaced line along the beach. Each presently dropped upon one knee and faced the belt of trees with ready muskets, awaiting the word, while a spattering of pistol shots came from the wood. A bluejacket at the extreme left of the naval line threw up his arms and fell squirming in the powdery sand.

"Ready!" shouted the lieutenant. "Fire! Charge! *At 'em, m'lads!*"

At the same time a puff of smoke burst from the larboard side of the *Sea Foam* in the offing. A ball hurtled, whining, over the higher tree-tops of the Isle of Avès.

CHAPTER XII

But Scripture saith, an ending to all fine things must be;
So the King's ships sailed on Avès, and quite put down were we.

—The Last Buccaneer.

A GROAN burst from the lips of Smiling Dick as the echoes of the first volley broke upon the clearing. He turned and met the staring eyes and blank face of Beeve Blowhard, then sought to counter the alarmed interrogations of the women. Mary Appleyard ran to her lover and clung to his arm. Teresa's face regained its curious, despairing sullenness.

"What is that? What has happened?" cried Katharine Vernon. "Surely the king's men have not fired upon a flag of truce?"

"No, worse luck—they have not!" said the mate, no longer the blasè, smiling swashbuckler.

All at once he turned his back upon the women and began cursing most fervently. Mary Appleyard, shocked at such language—sincere though it might be—in the presence of her mistress, cried:

"Dick! Dick! What is it?"

The mate turned a face that was wrought with despair. It almost seemed as if tears of exasperation were near his eyes. He looked with bitter disappointment and a sort of apologetic expression at the maid, then turned upon Beeve Blowhard.

"Come on, Beeve. We can't help ourselves now."

The fat buccaneer, whose face was almost comical in the distressful effort of deep thinking, nodded his head. To the surprise of Katharine and the indignation of Mary Appleyard, the latter's lover started toward the belt of trees on a run, followed at a waddling gait by Beeve.

"What?—why—where are they going?" gasped the maid.

Teresa it was who answered with a low, bitter laugh.

"They go to join *El Sangre* and their mates, who have declared for fight. They can do nothing else. They are buccaneers and they must hold together. It is their way. I know these men!"

That was precisely the situation in which Smiling Dick and Beeve Blowhard found themselves and the decision they had arrived at. Much as they regretted the way

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things had fallen out—not knowing just how they had fallen out—the old fellowship of the buccaneers had asserted itself. They would not turn traitor to their kind. Apparently the ruling of the majority, upon some unforeseen development, had precipitated fight; and the ruling of the majority was the law of the buccaneers. Smiling Dick and Beeve Blowhard, despite their disappointment, did not hesitate about the course that seemed to them proper and manly.

The women remained where they were, either helpless to move or realizing the futility of going anywhere else while the sounds of fighting began to spread all around them, for Smiling Dick and Beeve reached the belt of trees just in time to see the king's men charge up the beach, firing as they came.

Red Daniel and his men, their muskets and pistols empty, elected for a retreat to enable them to reload and gain the advantage of the labyrinthine jungle. The naval lieutenant, realizing the buccaneers' purpose, urged his men pell-mell after them, hoping to come to close quarters and cold steel before the firearms could again be brought into play.

Into the clearing Red Daniel, Smiling Dick and the rest of the buccaneers dashed, the leader cheering his men and urging them to cover, the mate cursing madly for a reason that was not apparent to his fellows. But still Smiling Dick went with them, turning as he ran to discharge his pistols at the oncoming king's men.

Already two of the latter had fallen, either dead or wounded, and three buccaneers were lying back there in the belt of trees where the first treacherous volley had been fired.

Across the clearing, with never even a glance at the women, went Red Daniel, and after him his men. Into the thick jungle they plunged; and there, turning, they gained respite through a lucky circumstance. Bruce Coulter, running at the head of his men, entered the clearing. With them was the little midshipman, brandishing a cutlas and yelling like a veteran warrior. At his heels toddled a monkey — the ship's mascot. Suddenly all came to a halt as the lieutenant stopped, stared at one of the women, and uttered a great cry.

"Katharine!"

"Bruce!" sobbed the woman, whose stately calm suddenly deserted her.

Next moment Katharine Vernon was in the arms of the man whose picture was in the little locket that nestled at her bosom.

From the edge of the jungle Red Daniel, turning to reconnoiter, saw this romantic climax. That this splendid creature might already have given to another the love he had sought to profane, had never occurred to him. Now a wave of envy, or brute jealousy, seized him. He whipped his musket to his shoulder and incautiously stepped out from the edge of the wood.

Two of the people in the clearing saw him simultaneously. One was Teresa, the other the little midshipman, Tommy Lee; and both divined his purpose immediately.

What happened then was not understood until it was cleared up later. Two shots rang out almost as one. An instant before, Teresa had uttered a warning cry and stepped between Red Daniel and Lieutenant Coulter, who, with Katharine, was directly in the line of *El Sangre's* fire. When the shots came Teresa was standing there with outspread arms.

When the thing was over and astonished eyes looked upon the result, Teresa had sunk to the ground; Père Labat, appearing from somewhere, was bending over her; Red Daniel had dropped his musket and was cursing as he nursed his left arm, while standing a little out from the group in the clearing was Midshipman Tommy Lee with a smoking musket in his hands and a glow of boyish triumph on his face.

"I got 'im!" yelled the little officer; and that broke the spell.

Red Daniel, with a defiant yell, disappeared into the brush. Bruce Coulter, remembering his office and his duty, tore himself from Katharine's arms and shouted to his men. Next minute the lieutenant, Midshipman Tommy, the monkey, and the bluejackets were in the tangled greenery, pursuing the buccaneers whose course could be traced by the sound of crashing undergrowth and occasional puffs of smoke.

The battle of the jungle was on, and a strange battle it was. The buccaneers knew every inch of the island; the naval men did not know it at all. The freebooters scattered and the battle became a series of skirmishes, sometimes duels; and far and near the creatures of the tropic forest screamed and scurried and fluttered as sudden turmoil broke out where a moment before there had been the primeval greenery

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and comparative silence. Which way the fortunes of battle were swaying neither side knew until afterward, and there were many participants who never learned the result.

Back in the clearing Katharine and her maid and Père Labat were left with the prostrate Teresa. Mary Appleyard, fear-stricken by the sudden calamity which had ended her dream; broken-hearted that, as it seemed to her, her buccaneer-lover had broken faith; was sitting on the ground, weeping bitterly. Katharine, on the other hand, was standing like a statue, gazing into the jungle where Bruce Coulter had disappeared and her fate was being written out in fire and steel. Her face was alight with a curious commingling of fear, joy, love and pride.

But all at once the memory of that swift tragedy, the echo of which was still ringing in the clearing, turned her attention to Père Labat and Teresa. The little priest, on his knees by the Spanish woman's side, suddenly opened his eyes and made the sign of the cross in silence. He had been praying for the soul of Teresa La Luz.

"She is dead," he said quietly. "May she rest in the peace which she knew could never be hers on earth. Whether she sought to save another stain from the page of *El Sangre's* crimes, or to sacrifice herself that your lover might live and your happiness be assured, Mistress Katharine, only God and Teresa la Luz know."

"But—I do not understand," said Katharine. "Who—fired the shot?"

"That I do not know, if it is that you mean—who killed the Señora Teresa. There were two shots. Whether it was the midshipman's ball or Red Daniel's I cannot be certain. But I think it was Red Daniel's, meant, for some reason, for the lieutenant, for I am almost sure the midshipman's struck *El Sangre* and wounded him in the arm."

A silence fell, broken only by the continued sobbing of the misery-stricken maid. Père Labat looked at her, then at Katharine, and lastly, with knitted brows, upon the still, calm face of Teresa. He decided upon the best course.

"Let us to the beach," he said. "I shall signal the king's ship to take us off. This is no place for women. Later she shall be given church burial."

Five minutes later the setting sun streamed redly through the belt of trees and fell upon the quiet face of Teresa where she lay alone in the clearing. From the distant jungle came a steady spattering of shots, then a lull broken by one or more, and accompanied by a scream or a rallying shout; then rapid volleys broke out.

Presently there was a rustling of the bushes by the edge of the clearing. Into the open space staggered Beeve Blowhard, his clothes torn by the thorny brakes and his red face streaming with perspiration. The part Beeve had taken in the fight was mainly of retreat. This retreat had been somewhat accelerated by the fact that one of the pursuers had singled him out for a quarry and, despite Beeve's best efforts to avoid him, was still hard on his tracks.

For a moment the fat buccaneer stood there wiping his face, panting, groaning and casting fearful looks over his shoulder into the dense and now darkling wood. Suddenly his eye encountered the figure of Teresa. Thinking that she might be in need of succor, for he was not aware of what had happened, and perhaps feeling that in an act of mercy he might gain clemency, he went toward her and sat down by the dead woman. Discovering the truth, his face took on a gray pallor and all at once the weak but good-hearted buccaneer broke down and shed tears of simple sentiment.

This was how his tracker discovered him. From the edge of the jungle a shrill voice cried:

"Don't move, sir! I have you!"

"As ye ha' human mercy," Beeve blubbered, "don't shoot me! I'm not fit to die, sir!"

"Very well. I will come and relieve you of your pistol," said the shrill voice, and presently Midshipman Tommy emerged from the jungle and advanced with ready musket upon the fat buccaneer.

Behind the little officer toddled the monkey. Whether he knew it followed him, whether he was aware that the *Sea Foam's* mascot had gotten into the boat with him and the armed bluejackets, Midshipman Tommy seemed quite unconscious of the incongruous companion. And Beeve did not seem to notice the animal either.

The midshipman came to a halt on the other side of the dead Teresa and suddenly took off his hat.

"A buccaneer shot her," he said simply. "I wasn't in time to prevent him, but I winged him just the same."

Beeve simply blubbered. His world was

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suddenly a thing of misery and death. The midshipman reflected upon the proper course of action.

"We ought to bury her at once. It is near sundown," said he, "and it is the rule—before sundown, you know."

Beeve agreed, whereupon the little middy looked around for a good place. His eye fell upon a patch of loose white sand near the edge of the clearing and within the belt of the trees.

"There's a good place," said he. "We'll dig a grave with our cutlases. But be so good as to keep in mind, sir, that you are my prisoner!"

Beeve promised absolute docility. He would have done anything he was told by any one who commanded him in that moment. He did not notice the particular spot at which they dug with their steel blades until the midshipman's cutlas dinted against iron-sheathed wood.

"What's this?" said Tommy.

"Oh—that?" said Beeve stupidly. "That's Daniel's treasure-chest."

"The what!" cried the little midshipman, becoming greatly excited. "Let's take it out! Let's take it out!"

They dug the sand from around the chest, but it took their combined, straining efforts to drag the thing clear. Then for a minute or two the midshipman forgot all about the purpose of the hole in elation over his find. The trunk was a curious-looking thing, not overlarge but of tremendous weight. It was sheathed in iron and painted all over and around with ships bearing the flags of all nations. In the front there was a false lock, the real keyhole being in the center of the top and carefully concealed by a sliding knob of iron which was cleverly painted to represent the foresail of a ship which surrounded it.

As it was impossible to open it without a key or a charge of gunpowder, the midshipman again turned to the more direct business in hand. The hole was lengthened and then Beeve and Midshipman Lee brought poor Teresa to her last resting-place.

When they had gathered leaves and laid them in the bottom of the grave and then as a covering over the dead, they filled in the hole with the loose sand. Tommy was deeply moved by the solemnity of his humane task. Beeve wept copiously, while the monkey sat near by with an expression of wise gravity.

When all was done Midshipman Tommy looked at Beeve with a puzzled expression.

"It doesn't seem quite regular," said he. "Ought we not to—to say a prayer, perhaps, and fire a salute?"

"We ought," said Beeve woefully.

There was silence for a moment. Presently Tommy picked up the musket, leveled it across the grave toward the setting sun, and fired. Then he bowed his head and shut his eyes.

Beeve, observing the example, remained as he had been on his knees and likewise prayed after his own manner.

Père Labat, having obtained a boat from the *Sea Foam* and sent the two women aboard, saw the odd scene from the belt of trees as he returned from the beach.

The little midshipman was standing, head bowed, hat in hand; Beeve Blowhard was on his knees, his fat hands clasped and he was audibly praying; and the monkey sat by, closely imitating its young master.

Père Labat paused; then, unknown to the curious trio by the grave, stepped out from the edge of the tree-belt and stood there with his hand upraised in benediction.

And the rays of the setting sun fell full upon his face uplifted to the God of all humanity.

CHAPTER XIII

Odds bobs, hammer and tongs, long as I've been to sea,
I've fought 'gainst every odds—and I've gained the victoree!

—*The Captain's Song.*

WHEN the sun was but a reddish rim rapidly diminishing on the horizon of the Caribbean and the early darkness of the woods made men's aim uncertain, the battle of the jungle became the battle of the sands.

The buccaneers rallied to the whistle of Red Daniel, whom they found nursing his left arm under a cottonwood tree just within the line where the timber abruptly ceased and the white beach sloped down into the sea.

The buccaneers came in from all directions and gathered around their chief. In the distance they could hear the shouts of the tars as they beat the underbrush, hunting out their quarry. Red Daniel cautioned his men to silence while they held a conference.

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"Where are the rest?" he asked savagely, noting that only about half his crew had reappeared and that the mate was missing.

Nobody knew, or at least cared to venture an opinion.

"Then the jig is up," said *El Sangre*, "for no matter what they ha' lost they have another brood ready aboard the king's ship. We ha' still one chance to clear scot-free. The tide is high. The *Black Spider* is afloat. We shall fight our way to it and trust to luck to make sail and beat to sea."

It was a slim chance with the *Sea Foam* lying in the offing, but it was the only one and death and Davy Jones' locker were preferable to a yard-arm or the gibbets of Port Royal. Even as Red Daniel spoke the king's men, led by Lieutenant Coulter, burst from the brush, sighted the buccaneers and again opened fire.

The battle was resumed, a running battle as before, but this time in the open of the beach. The buccaneers, knowing every step of the way, gained some advantage in flight over the bluejackets who, like most sailors ashore, were poor runners. But even at that it looked ill for the freebooters' plan to gain the *Black Spider* and get away before they were decimated by musket fire or cutlas work at close quarters.

But half-way toward the eastern point of rocks which obscured the *Sea Foam's* vision of this latest movement, further fortune favored the buccaneers. From the woods on the right hand there rushed out upon the beach, some distance ahead, a half-dozen buccaneers led by Smiling Dick, the mate. His fellows had become detached from the main group and, finding the mate, had rallied around him as captain for the time being.

Smiling Dick, glancing along the beach toward the oncoming buccaneers and noting that they were closely pursued by the *Sea Foam's* men, instantly surmised Red Daniel's plan and took loyal measures to facilitate it.

Instead of waiting to assist in retarding the oncome of the bluejackets, the mate ordered his followers to make speed with him to the *Black Spider*. Arrived there well ahead of *El Sangre's* group, they found the brigantine afloat and tugging gently at her beach anchor. The latter was immediately cast off. Smiling Dick plunged into the sea, leaving the boat for the more hard-pressed Red Daniel and, followed by his handful of men, clambered aboard the buccaneer craft and at once began to cast over rope-ladders, hawser ends, anything that would enable the beset party to make a swift boarding.

"Stand by to haul in the moment our lads are aboard!" shouted Dick, his heart torn between loyalty to his fellows and the thought of what might have been.

But the bluejackets were too close on the heels of the buccaneers for the execution of the plan. Indeed the pursued turned upon their pursuers of necessity at the water's edge, and while Red Daniel and six or seven piled into the boat and pushed off, the others engaged and held the king's men back.

A bitter fight ensued, though not comparable with what was to follow. About ten men fell on either side and the foam of the surf was stained red. Then, as soon as Red Daniel and the men in the boat had gained the *Black Spider's* side and hauled themselves aboard, the defenders of the retreat rushed into the sea, hoping to be hauled aboard before the bluejackets could follow.

But the king's men were determined to see things to a finish. Even in the water, within swimming depth and without, both sides grappled. Here cutlases could not be used to advantage, but men closed in pairs, clutching at each other's hair, at each other's throat; gouging eyes with their thumbs; cursing, clawing, biting. Sometimes a pair sank together and bubbles alone told of the end of a duel.

From the decks above, Red Daniel and his men hurled empty or sea-soaked muskets, marlinespikes, iron shot—anything they could lay hands on that would deter the king's men below; but these wrought as much havoc among their own men in the water.

Then, despite their hopes, the inhauled ropes and rope ladders brought friend and foe alike aboard, and the battle was resumed on the deck of the *Black Spider*.

In the center of this fury was Lieutenant Coulter with a reddened blade in his hand, fighting like a demon; for the cup of happiness was at his lip and it was needful that he ward off the death that was ready to snatch it from him. He fought for love as well as duty.

He was unaware of what Red Daniel's attitude had been toward Katharine Vernon, but instinct told him that this man was his personal enemy and should be his personal

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meat. Throughout the battle of the ship—the third of the conflict's varied series—he hacked and hewed his way, ever hoping to reach and cross blades with the red-bearded buccaneer whom men called *El Sangre*. Ever he saw him, battling and roaring but a few yards from him, but ever it seemed, as a red path to him fell clear, some other less worthy of his steel disputed the right of way.

In the meantime, before finding a means of boarding the brigantine—which was now drifting in the inshore waters—Coulter had sent a man to the top of the eastern pile of rocks to signal the *Sea Foam* for reenforcement. But by the time the man began semaphoring Captain Hallock had surmised the need and the place from the uproar and smoke that ascended from behind these rocks. Even then a boat was being lowered away and a score of armed tars piling into it.

But the end was to come before that boat arrived. Lieutenant Coulter at last found himself face to face with Red Daniel.

"Ha, my gay cock sparrow!" cried *El Sangre*. "I ha' been waiting a chance with you. Have at ye! I'll trim the gold lace from ye, my pretty bantam!"

El Sangre's face was alight with battle joy. He was no coward and he loved fight as he loved rum. He had risen to his place among the buccaneers of the Main by his very combative abilities. And now he engaged the leader of the king's men with as much delight of anticipation as he would have sat down to a barbecue.

But his battling had ever been more of the muscular order. They had not been engaged a half minute before it troubled him to find that he somehow could not break through the guard of the light weapon that made mock of his ponderous cutlas, let alone guard against its slithering, snake-tongued darts. And as the battle progressed the buccaneer was handicapped by his left arm, which was nigh helpless. Time and again Lieutenant Coulter could have driven his steel home; yet he refrained. He was ambitious to see this red-bearded rascal dangling from a yard-arm.

Red Daniel read the message and the intent in his opponent's face. His fury arose and, as a result, his fighting became less of a problem to the lieutenant. *El Sangre's* breath began to come hoarsely from his chest and in the deepening dusk his crimson face streamed with beads of perspiration.

"So you grow weary, my killer of women?" said Coulter, warding off a heavy cut and pinking Red Dan on the cheek.

The buccaneer cursed and lunged vainly. Then a shout came from where they were fighting on the afterdeck.

"Another boat of king's men coming!"

El Sangre heard and knew that the end had come. With a curse he suddenly threw his cutlas in Coulter's face. The lieutenant's own blade but partially warded it off. The flung weapon struck his head. For a moment he reeled unsteadily with the warm blood trickling about his left ear. When he recovered himself Red Daniel had vanished and he found himself faced by a new antagonist—a smiling, handsome devil who politely bowed and waited until the lieutenant was ready to begin.

"Marry!" said this buccaneer as he engaged, "I ha' no desire to tap your vitals, m' lad, but, an I do not, I fear ye will tap mine. So have at ye—and here's to the ladies!"

"Then why risk either?" said Coulter, grinning in spite of his exhaustion and the fact that this smiling buccaneer fought with a delicate skill in which his chief had been lacking. "Surrender and take your chances, which I warn ye are but slight for your good."

"I would, and be glad," said the buccaneer as his blade slid past within an inch of the lieutenant's jugular, "but the rest are not of the same mind, and—ha! ye nigh touched me then—and as the old chantey hath it, 'in fair or foul weather, we all will hang together!'"

But this curious duel was interrupted suddenly when a buccaneer—it was Black Tom—suddenly emerged from the companion, which was right behind Coulter's opponent.

He said something which was audible and understandable apparently to Smiling Dick, who was doing battle, but not to his antagonist. Bruce Coulter saw a queer look cross the handsome buccaneer's face and suddenly he laughed.

"So I am not to kill ye after all," said he. "I would advise ye, sir, to take a swim. 'Twill be cooler than here presently."

With that the buccaneer backed clear of the lieutenant's weapon and, before the latter could press after him, leaped to the gunwale of the brigantine and shouted:

"Overboard lads. *Daniel's lit a match!*"

The buccaneers understood instantly, fell

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away from their individual antagonists, sprang to the gunwale and followed the mate's example of taking a header into the sea. The king's men were slower to grasp the meaning of it all. It was the lieutenant upon whom it first flashed.

"For your lives, lads!" he shouted. "Over the side!"

As soon as he saw his men take steps to obey, he himself ran to the gunwale, ready to dive. He looked back to see if his warning had reached all. Like magic the deck of the *Black Spider* had become deserted, save for the dead and wounded, and some of the latter were making frantic efforts to reach the gunwale.

And in that glance the lieutenant saw Red Daniel dash from the companion and make to cross the deck to the gunwale. The bearded buccaneer was laughing recklessly, as if he had perpetrated a last, excellent, practical jest.

But before he had taken two steps from the companion head, the planks under his feet seemed to heave up. Coulter saw this with his own eyes. At the same time he, himself, was hurled backward into the sea, while the brigantine, *Black Spider*, belched upward in a mighty column of black smoke and red fire, accompanied by an explosion that seemed to shake the very foundations of the Isle of Avès.

And that was all Lieutenant Bruce Coulter of his Majesty's sloop of war, *Sea Foam*, remembered for some little time.

CHAPTER XIV

Haul on the bow-line, the fore and maintop bow-line!
Haul on the bow-line, the bow-line—haul!
—*Songs of the Chantey Man.*

DAWN broke upon the Caribbean and the *Sea Foam* under full sail before a half gale from the southeast. Avès was full twenty leagues of sea behind and there was little there significant of yesterday's turmoil but the wreckage of the buccaneer brigantine and, in the clearing, a sand mound with a rough wooden cross at its head. The other victims of bloodshed had also been given decent burial.

Aboard the sloop of war an anxious night had been passed. It was not for the good English tars who had died in the fighting of the previous day, nor for those who survived, but a dozen buccaneers, all that remained of the *Black Spider's* company, were aboard; and what the future and Port Royal held for them was in grave doubt. But for Red Daniel's treachery and betrayal of the truce their might have been hope of clemency through Père Labat's good offices. But now . . . .

After the explosion which ended the battle, the remaining buccaneers, among them Smiling Dick, had surrendered. From the surf they had fished scorched, half-drowned men, among them Lieutenant Bruce Coulter blackened with smoke and unconscious. *El Sangre* they found—blackened—dead!

It was late in the night when the naval boats returned to the *Sea Foam*. By lantern light they hoisted aboard the unconscious victor of the fight and the others who were wounded to helplessness. Two buccaneers and one bluejacket died, and it was Père Labat who lightened their passing.

Among other things brought aboard was an iron-sheathed chest, which Midshipman Tommy explained the while he prodded Beeve Blowhard with his cutlas by way of indicating that the fat buccaneer was his personal captive.

It was a proud day in the life of Midshipman Tommy, but he shared his honors with the mascot monkey which had smelt powder with him in the great island adventure.

During that night, in his own cabin below, Lieutenant Coulter lay senseless, partly from exhaustion, partly from the shock which had hurled him clear of the ill-fated brigantine. Beside him, waiting for the consciousness for which she prayed, was Katharine Vernon. And when the light dawned in her lover's eyes, she laid her head upon his breast and gave herself up to quiet weeping.

Presently Père Labat was summoned. The little priest, a little haggard from exertion and lack of sleep, came to the cabin. It appeared that the lieutenant, not fearing to die, but fearing he might, desired that Katharine be made his wife at once. Père Labat's eyes twinkled; but nevertheless he summoned the captain. There in the privacy of the cabin the lovers were made one, after which the happy hero closed his eyes. Later he awoke from a deep sleep with a curious appreciation of the advantages of living and an almost shameful desire for a wedding-breakfast.

But before this was served by permission of Captain Hallock, the little priest stole

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another march upon sentiment. During the night he had found a pair of melancholy lovers seated together in a sheltered corner of the deck. One of them—the man—had a broken arm, sustained when he jumped into the shallows from the brigantine; the other—the woman—was much concerned for that arm. The other still retained utility and was employed as befitted the situation.

"But why pipe your eye over a broken arm," said Smiling Dick, "when 'twill be a broken neck at Port Royal?"

It was after this that Père Labat held a conference with them, discovering the pair as described. He sat down beside them, crossing his legs upon the deck and tucking his cassock under him, for the night air on deck was damp and chilly.

"Dick," said he, "y'are a sorry rascal, but ye have a good heart. Now, an' it please ye both, join hands and speak after me."

They obeyed, wondering. The little priest took a small black book from his breast and began to read from it. When he asked them to speak certain words after him, understanding swiftly dawned upon Smiling Dick and Mary Appleyard.

"But I did not say I would wed him," protested the maid. "Indeed I will not!"

"Young woman!" said Père Labat severely. "Do you put your wisdom above your mistress's? Pray do not interrupt me in the holy office."

Mary did not interrupt again. She even allowed the priest to kiss her cheek when he had replaced the book in his cassock breast. Dick did not resent this example, even following it.

"There!" said Père Labat, rising. "An Colonel Vernon loves his daughter and the daughter hath regard for her maid, it may be thy neck, Richard, shall last a while yet!"

It was even so when the *Sea Foam* came to Port Royal. Colonel Vernon, commander of his Majesty's forces, was deeply grateful for his daughter's safe return to his arms. Père Labat, it is to be feared, was somewhat partial to the part the buccaneers had played in the salvation of the women, particularly one, Smiling Dick. Colonel Vernon heard so much of this same Smiling Dick from Katharine and from Père Labat and from Lieutenant Coulter who had all but recovered by the time Jamaica was made—that he presently developed a keen desire to see this smiling person, also one Beeve Blowhard, who was said to have some claim upon his daughter under the law of the buccaneers.

The buccaneers, in the meantime, had been lodged in the felon cages hard by the famous gibbets of Gallows Point. There they spent several days and had the doubtful entertainment of seeing several fellows of their late profession ascend a ladder which was presently removed from under them.

It was during these days of encagement that Smiling Dick, who had given up all hope of life or of ever seeing his bride again, made a discovery that filled him with mingled hope and fear. He learned that the administration of Jamaica had recently been changed. The new governor, who had superseded Sir Thomas Modyford, was determined to make an example of all pirates. The new governor's name was Sir Harry Morgan.

"'Tis a pity," said Smiling Dick when it was whispered among the newcome buccaneers that their old chief had turned pious with the aid of the king's favor and a title; "'tis a pity Red Daniel were not here to express an opinion."

"We be dead men," said Beeve Blowhard gloomily. "I can feel my flesh turnin' blue already."

In a corner of the cage sat Black Tom, chewing the cud of deep reflection upon this new circumstance. He said nothing then, or afterward, save to Harry Morgan personally.

Although Bruce Coulter and Katharine Vernon had already received benefit of clergy aboard the *Sea Foam*, Père Labat was not loath to perform the ceremony more fully in order to permit of the indulgence of those human vanities with which the little priest had certain human sympathy.

It was a very grand wedding—military on the bride's side, naval on the bridegroom's and generally attended by all the king's servants and officers in the colony. Even the governor, Sir Harry Morgan, was there.

Crowds assembled, not only to cheer the bride and groom and the culmination of their adventurous romance, but to gaze upon that remarkable figure who, one day a scourge of the Caribbees, another day on trial for piracy and now a titled governor of the very colony where there had been a price on his head, entered the old church at

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Port Royal, dressed in velvets and laces, with a cocked hat on his head and a slight curl on his lips, while the populace bowed and scraped on the doorstep.

And it was after the wedding and the ensuing feast that the story of the bride's adventures on the Isle of Avès was repeated for Sir Harry Morgan's benefit. The ex-king of the buccaneers listened with the utmost gravity, but once or twice his eyes narrowed shrewdly as Père Labat, who insisted upon amending or correcting everybody else's version of these happenings, enlarged upon the villainy of the defunct Red Daniel to the contrasting credit of Smiling Dick; not forgetting Beeve Blowhard.

"Rascally rogues, your Excellency," said the little priest, "but 'twas only the circumstance of the Spanish-English peace that withdrew the king's own sanction upon their acts. And I ha' known many a buccaneer who was not without his good traits."

Others who stood by furtively watching Morgan's face, marveled at the courage of the little priest, but Morgan never twitched an eyelid and Père Labat went on fearlessly to recite his brief for the remnant of Red Daniel's crew. He made much of the burial by Beeve Blowhard of poor Teresa, quite omitting Midshipman Tommy from the incident, and of Smiling Dick's effort to have the crew surrender to the king's mercy and live a godly life. He told, too, quite feelingly, of the love affair which had sprung up between Dick and Mistress Vernon's—that is, Mistress Coulter's—maid.

"What would ye, Chaplain?" inquired Morgan at last. "Would ye marry them?"

"That I have done already," said Père Labat coolly, dropping a piece of information which came as a surprise to Katharine and everybody else except the maid, who hid blushing behind her mistress. "I would have you spare this man's life, your Excellency."

Sir Harry Morgan frowned and tugged at his long mustaches.

"I ha' taken oath," said he, "that I shall ha' no mercy on such as are pirates. Shall I foreswear myself, Priest?"

"Nay," said Père Labat, "if it be the Excellency's intention *to hang himself!*"

Had a thunderbolt burst through the roof, consternation could not have been worse than at this bold remark. Sir Harry Morgan turned pale with shock and he glared at the little priest, who was imperturbably fingering the silver cross on his breast. The group who had been listening to Père Labat and watching the effect of the narration upon the great buccaneers who was now a king's knight, waited for something terrible to happen.

But slowly a gleam of ironic humor flitted about Morgan's lips. All at once he burst out laughing. He threw his head back as he laughed, and his mirth rang out from a throat which had often roared above the clamor of guns. He laughed and he laughed. Tears rolled down his diabolically handsome face. Even after he had sobered somewhat the ironic humor of the thing started him to shaking again, and those who had feared the results of Père Labat's boldness joined in the merriment out of sheer relief.

At last Sir Harry collected himself and said:

"Chaplain, ye have a brave tongue that, were ye other than a priest, might yet be the undoing of ye. But, as ye say, these men had some sanction of the king, and if it be that they are truly desirous of foreswearing that which ha' become a sorry trade, I may even give a thought to their case. Fetch these men before me at Spanish Town tomorrow."

Next morning Smiling Dick, Beeve Blowhard, Black Tom, Hairy, Swanky, Slumgullion and several other buccaneers were taken across the Kingston lagoon to the old Wherry Inne, where many a time in palmier days the pirates had made merry, and thence they traveled in chains over the hot, dusty road of the *salinas* to St. Jago, or as it was now called, Spanish Town. They were accompanied on foot by Père Labat who, when arrival was made at the old Spanish capital, was gray from head to foot with dust and declared himself as thirsty as a lizard.

The buccaneers were brought before Sir Harry Morgan where he sat alone in a great bare room in the old house which was temporarily the governor's palace. Morgan gave one hasty glance over the group, let his eyes rest momentarily on Smiling Dick and particularly on Black Tom; then he turned to Père Labat.

"I would speak to some of these rascals alone, Chaplain," said he. "I fear that seductive tongue of thine. But take the two of whom ye spoke. I will deal with the others."

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Smiling Dick started. Beeve stared. Père Labat took each by an arm and withdrew them to the door. There, Smiling Dick, realizing that he was free to live—*pardoned!*—turned and looked curiously at Sir Harry Morgan.

"I thank your Excellency!" said he, with a bow which was slightly mocking as was the accent on the title.

"Aye, aye, Dick!" said Morgan with a chuckle. "Ye ha' changed little since the night off San Lorenzo."

To whatever incident of the past Morgan referred, Dick stood not upon the order of taking his departure. Beeve, not to be outdone in courtesy, made an awkward bow in the doorway and said:

"I thank your excellent Majesty. Many's a time I greased your Grace's pistols and fetched the flip-can——"

"Silence!" roared Morgan. "Get ye gone, or by m' rawhide boots——"

Beeve did not wait to hear the rest. He bolted and overhauled Père Labat and Smiling Dick. The priest was giving the handsome buccaneer a farewell lecture and threatening him with bell, book and candle if he did not thereafter lead a godly life. Beeve he dismissed with a jest.

The two buccaneers returned together to Port Royal, where they went their several ways. Beeve celebrated his reform by getting horribly intoxicated that night at the Hell-Fire Club, a tavern buccaneers mostly did frequent. Smiling Dick repaired to the servants' gate of Colonel Vernon's house, and when his wife returned from the interior where she had accompanied the lieutenant and his bride on their honeymoon, she found her ex-buccaneer husband installed as the military commander's strong-arm factotum. Later, after the Colonel's death, he became attached in a similar capacity to the household of Captain Coulter. Here Smiling Dick and his wife, formerly Mary Appleyard of Kent, ruled and attempted to rule each other as matron and majordomo of the Coulter family.

What became of Black Tom, Hairy, Slumgullion, Swanky and the other surviving buccaneers of Red Daniel's crew is wrapped in some mystery. They put to sea some weeks later on a secret mission, said to be for Sir Harry Morgan himself; and the cook of the small vessel which Black Tom commanded under gubernatorial sanction was Beeve Blowhard, who was taken aboard at the last minute, tearful but otherwise inert.

Before that, Smiling Dick had encountered the sentimental buccaneer while the latter was deep in his cups and had gathered this description—somewhat mixed and second-hand, but here rendered fairly intelligible—of the interview that day between Morgan and his quondam fellows—

Morgan got up and locked the door.

"So there ye are, ye hangman's meat!" said he, coming back to his gubernatorial seat. "And Hairy, too, and Slumgullion and Swanky, the sea-lawyer. 'Tis a sight for sore eyes!"

"Aye, aye, Harry—meanin' your gracious Excellency," said Black Tom, quick to sense something up the wind. "What's the lay?"

Morgan leaned across the table with a curling smile and keen narrowed eyes.

"Five lays to me and two and two alike," he whispered, "as before. One chest was not all. Where did Red Daniel bury the rest of it?"

BE THAT as it may, and whatever mission Black Tom and the rest sailed upon, and whether they revisited the pleasant Isle of Avès just to see it once again, is not recorded even in the records of Gallows Point. Père Labat makes no mention of these matter either.

The little priest continued his good work among the people of the islands, sailing hither and thither in whatever craft happened to be going his way. And once a year he revisited Los Santos and christened the babies, married the lovers, confirmed the young people, visited the sick and said masses for those who had died in his absence.

Truly beloved—and three hundred years later his name is still recalled with affection—he was at a ripe old age when he returned to his native France.

There, in the calm of his declining days, he wrote down from his many notes some of these strange adventures when he was chaplain to the buccaneers.

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ON GUARD

by Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton

Authors of "Penitentiary Post," "The Trail of the Black Fox," etc.

AS MAX, who had served them every Monday night since the opening of the hotel sixteen years before, pulled back John Wentworth's chair, Dr. Pearsall and Captain Bennet arose and the three joined hands across the little table. The knuckles of the three veterans of the Civil War whitened under the pressure and their eyes were softened as with the gleam of campfires. Max placed glasses before them and the handclasps were slowly loosened and the liquor lifted.

"To our next meeting!"

They drank as they had for so many years, slowly and confidently, as though their meetings would be infinite.

"Herb, you old thief!" exclaimed the doctor when they were seated, "you're grafting already. You've got a new tie."

"Hush!" warned the captain. "John told me I'd have to go snucks with him because he made a speech for me at council-meeting."

"Hardest thing I ever did," growled the alderman. "But you're welcome to anything you can graft when you're health commissioner in this town."

The dinner was more merry than usual. The next morning Wentworth would leave for a month in Florida and Dr. Pearsall would start on his annual vacation, four weeks of study in a famous hospital in an adjoining State. That day Captain Bennet had spent as his first in office, Hartland's health commissioner.

"We're leaving you on guard, Herb," laughed the doctor.

The captain laughed, too, but for the second time since he had received his appointment he felt a sudden, choking swelling in his chest. "On guard!" He still could serve, then. There was still need for his service.

He looked at the others. For the first time in the long years he felt that he sat at the table on equal terms with the respected physician and the successful manufacturer.

They had returned to Hartland ready to forget the war. He had never been able to forget. They had prospered, had ceased to be soldiers. With Captain Bennet the four years had served for a lifetime, and peace had found him a failure as great as war had found him an efficient participant.

Gentle, kindly, irreproachable, loved for those qualities by his old comrades and by their sons and daughters, respected, without enemies, still success had strangely never come to him. Others like him came out of the Civil War, men who found peace a strange thing they could not grasp. They

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worked, they gave themselves, and they failed. Perhaps they were the men who would have been failures anyhow, and yet whose spirits had been so refined they could not fall to the depths of the modern economic outcast.

Captain Bennet was one of those left stranded by a national tempest. He knew he was a failure, perhaps divined the cause, and yet he remained as sweet and gentle as in his youth. Always there had been with him the hope that some day his chance would return, that again he would be in the ranks. Dr. Pearsall understood all this thoroughly and his friend's exaltation became his own.

"You've got a fight or two left in you yet, Herb!" he exclaimed.

Their lifetime together, and that intuition as characteristic of an old practitioner as of a woman, had enabled him to see beneath the captain's smile and to understand the joy in his reenlistment. And because Captain Bennet felt the change, because Dr. Pearsall saw it, and John Wentworth sensed it, that of all their weekly dinners was memorable.

The spell of what he felt to be his rehabilitation and of his reentrance into what he considered the service of his country was still with Captain Bennet when he went down to his office the next morning. His soaring spirit did not permit him to understand when stooped, cane-clattering, cackling old George Saunders, a failure like himself but a soured one, offered his opinion.

"Well, I see Wentworth's landed you that pension job, Herb," he said. "You always were lucky, and now you get fifty a month with nothing to do. Fool State law or we wouldn't have to have a health commissioner."

Captain Bennet went on, untouched for the moment by what had been said. But as he opened the door of his dusty cubbyhole of an office its unmistakable air of emptiness and uselessness brought back Saunders' words.

"Fool State law or we wouldn't have to have a health commissioner."

The captain drew back, one hand still on the knob, the other reaching uncertainly toward his wrinkled face. With sudden force the significance of his appointment struck him. He recalled others who had held the office. Failures all! And he was only another! Service? It was only charity. "Fool State law." The position must be filled, then. And they had betrayed him to this!

The exaltation vanished, and as it went he saw that it had been founded upon an illusion. He was still old Herb Bennet, derelict, resentful of benevolence, yet unfit for duty. And the wound was deeper because his friends, the two who knew and understood him best, and who loved him despite his failure, had not really understood, had so unthinkingly betrayed him to this public alms.

But his fighting spirit thrust itself through the great hurt. There was escape and independence in an immediate resignation, and they would have it. Instantly he was erect in his chair, drawing a sheet of paper toward him. He started bravely, determinedly. But gradually the enervating sense of loneliness retarded his pen. Slowly his fingers relaxed and he looked hopelessly across the litter of pamphlets on the desk.

"Murderer. Unhung!" shouted the cover of one.

Absently he began to read. "The murderer," he found, was a health commissioner who, through failure to disinfect a house after a death due to tuberculosis, had permitted the onward march of the disease.

The captain reached for a second pamphlet.

For days he sat in his office, and in his home at night, reading the health laws of the State, literature from the State Board of Health and appeals from many organizations.

And, as he read, the smell of gunpowder crept into his nostrils, imperceptibly at first, and then suddenly he felt the command of battle. There was service. There was a task. It was the greater because he alone in all Hartland realized it. The resignation was forgotten. Captain Bennet began to plan his last campaign.

ALDERMAN WENTWORTH was the first caller at Dr. Pearsall's office upon the latter's return, and the captain was the cause.

"We made a pretty mess of it, getting Herb that job!" he spluttered.

"What's the trouble?" asked the doctor anxiously.

"Trouble enough. He's stirring up the

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whole town, and I'm getting the kicks because I pushed his appointment through the council."

"But what has he done?"

"He's been inspecting everybody in town, meat markets and dairies, and he's threatened to close half of them if they don't clean up."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"Oh, that's not so bad. Perhaps some of them need it. But he's gone too far with them. And now he's served notice on the ice company that ice cut in the slough can't be sold in the city. The company's lawyer says Herb has the power to do what he says. He's interfering with business, Ed, and we've got to stop him."

The doctor knew that Wentworth owned much of the ice company stock.

"Herb's a hard man to stop, John. Better let me talk to him. He might not understand."

"I'll talk to him myself. I'm going over to the city hall now."

"Herb," he blustered, pushing the health commissioner back into his office a few minutes later, "what do you think we appointed you for? To pester every taxpayer in the community, interfere with business and make the city notorious? People aren't going to stand for that sort of thing, not for a minute."

"I don't know what you mean, John. I haven't done anything that is not right and proper."

"You've set a hornets' nest loose around my head. All the aldermen are kicking to me because I'm the one who put your appointment through. My constituents are kicking because, they say, you are meddling in their affairs, threatening to close them up if they don't do as you say. You're not the mayor, man. You're only health commissioner. You can't drive a man out of town like that, nor can you tell a man what he can sell and what he can't."

"You mean the ice company?"

"Yes, Herb," the aldermen went on more gently when he found so little resistance. "I own a lot of stock in that company. Ice was high last year, and the people kicked. If we go to Clear Lake it means higher ice next Summer. It's been high enough as it is, and we'll lose money."

Captain Bennet walked to the window and looked out. For a long time he was silent. Wentworth began to speak again, but the old soldier did not hear. How could he, whose life had been empty, answer this competent, successful friend? How could he convey even a hint of the great idea toward which he himself was only groping?

Wentworth did not know. None of them knew. But the law demanded it, prophets were pointing the way, a sleeping, unthinking public needed it. And he had been chosen, by accident, it is true, but chosen nevertheless, to lead a detachment in the charge. He had accepted, and it was his duty. And before duty Captain Bennet forgot self, friendship, everything.

He turned to find his old friend smiling, confident, ready to leave.

"There is nothing that I have done—" and the alderman started uneasily at the tone he had not heard for more than half a century—"that I will not continue to do, that I will not continue to back up with all the power the law accords me. My orders to the dairymen and the butchers stand, as well as those to the ice company."

"But, Herb, I tell you I own a lot of stock in that company!"

"I didn't know that, but it would have made no difference. Ice was never so high as two years ago when we had twenty-six funerals from the typhoid germs sold in that ice. It won't happen again."

"Do you mean that I sold germs, that I killed those people?" demanded Wentworth wrathfully.

"Not knowingly, John, but the typhoid epidemic was due to the ice."

The alderman choked, gasped, tried to speak. When he found that he could not he turned and left the room.

Captain Bennet had expected opposition, and the soldier in him had welcomed it when it came. But this was like an unexpected attack in the rear.

"John doesn't understand, is all," he tried to reassure himself as he made another round of meat markets and dairies. The next morning he went to the slough and saw that ice-cutting operations had been transferred to Clear Lake.

"John sees it now. I knew he would when he had thought it over. It's just like him not to come and tell me."

And with the confidence of a man who believes that his allies are with him, he returned to his office to consider his latest fight. In the face of a growing epidemic

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of whooping-cough, physicians of the city had refused to report their cases that he might act.

MONDAY morning, when there had been no response to his third demand for reports, the captain realized that prosecution was his next step. But he hesitated. One case was under the care of Dr. Pearsall. If he took legal action his friend must suffer with the others. It was the hope that he might win peaceably through this one physician, however, that caused him to postpone action.

"I'll talk with Ed at the dinner tonight," he decided. "He'll understand, and he'll make the others understand."

It would be the first gathering of the three since that following the captain's appointment and he arrived at the hotel early and eager. In the lobby he met the doctor and they went in together.

"Stirring things up a little, Herb?" asked Pearsall when they were seated.

"Only doing what should have been done long ago."

"Yes, such things do get lax. That's the reason you should go at it gently. People nowadays don't know anything about war, and military tactics are resented."

"My tactics have been civil enough. I have only tried to enforce some of the laws. In time I hope to enforce them all."

"Yes, yes, by all means. But don't hurry. No official ever thinks of enforcing all the laws we have. We have too many altogether. The good executive uses discretion, especially in health laws. So many of them bring unnecessary publicity. The people don't like it, and the best of us must be governed by the people."

"You mean reporting cases of whooping-cough?" interrupted Captain Bennet.

"Yes, that's one thing. It's hardly necessary, and it causes so much trouble and inconvenience. Our patients would never stand for it with so mild a disease."

"But children have died of it."

"Sometimes."

"And pneumonia is easily possible as a resulting complication."

"Yes, but the people wouldn't stand being quarantined for such a thing, and as I said we must be governed by the people. Then, we must remember our friends. Laws at best are inhuman in their nature, Herb, and we're all human."

The captain stared at Dr. Pearsall. He was not only defending his own failure and that of other physicians to report cases, but he was speaking for Wentworth and the ice company. Captain Bennet could not hide his thoughts, and the doctor, seeing the quick change in his expression, hurried to another subject.

"It is seldom that John is late!" he exclaimed as he looked at his watch. "Any message from Mr. Wentworth, Max?"

"None, sir."

Dr. Pearsall spoke of the clinics he had attended, of the value he had derived from his annual pilgrimage to the hospital, but neither he nor the captain could maintain interest in the subject.

"John should have sent word if he could not come," complained the physician irritably as seven o'clock struck. "Perhaps we had better not wait."

"Perhaps not," agreed the captain, who had been looking absently at the door.

Dr. Pearsall nodded to Max and the waiter set glasses before them. Awkwardly the two men arose. They grasped hands for an instant.

"To our next meeting," proposed the doctor with forced cheerfulness.

"To our next meeting," whispered Captain Bennet.

They hurried through their dinner and left the hotel, Dr. Pearsall to visit a patient, Captain Bennet to the little house where he lived with his daughter and her husband.

After a sleepless night Captain Bennet left his office Tuesday morning to see the district attorney. That official protested, argued, but the captain was firm.

"I'll swear out the warrants and furnish the evidence," he insisted.

"Very well!" snapped the prosecutor. "Give me the names."

Captain Bennet read from a list he had prepared.

"That all?" asked the attorney when the old man paused.

"And Dr. Edward Pearsall," said the captain firmly, but his hand trembled as he crumpled the paper and left the office.

That afternoon the warrants were served on the physicians of Hartland and that night all the city had the news. Captain Bennet's action crystalized sentiment

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against him and he stood alone the next morning when, on opening his mail, he received a physician's report of a case of diphtheria. The afternoon brought three more, and Thursday morning seven. Before noon physicians had reported two more by phone. In the face of diphtheria the whooping-cough feud was forgotten.

All the patients were school-children. Captain Bennet went immediately to the dry-goods store of Horace Goodnow, president of the school board.

"Did you have the rooms disinfected yesterday?" he asked.

"Those from which the pupils went home ill."

"It's not enough. Nine more cases today. The schools should be closed. There is a board meeting tonight. The time to act is before it is too late."

Horace Goodnow had taken little interest in Captain Bennet's health campaign because it in no way interested or affected him. He thought only of two things, his business and the city's schools. Now the activity of this old soldier, of which he had heard, was reaching him.

"The school board is perfectly capable of managing its own affairs," he replied coldly. "There is no necessity of closing the schools."

"They should be closed and closed now!" snapped the captain. "I will send a communication to the board tonight. I would rather you would act, and I will give you the opportunity."

Goodnow was in no frame of mind to accord favorable consideration to the health commissioner's communication that night. He spoke of the old soldier's officious proceedure, only to draw the advice from a lawyer member that the captain had the power to do most anything he liked. But the board followed Goodnow and there was no order to close the schools, although four more cases had been reported that afternoon.

Captain Bennet called on the superintendent of schools the next morning while that official was eating breakfast. Without speaking, the commissioner placed a sheet of paper before him.

"Close the schools!" the superintendent exclaimed. "But the board decided last night not to comply with your request."

"I requested last night. Now I am ordering. There will be no session today, nor until the epidemic is past. Call up the city attorney now. He will tell you I have the power. Be sensible, for I'll use the police if I have to."

The captain was too busy to remain and argue, nor was he in the mood. He hurried to his office and found the report of another case.

THAT afternoon the storm broke over the captain's head. Dairymen and butchers, the first to feel the new régime, had aroused their friends. The ice company had continued to protest. Two real-estate agents, who had felt the captain's activities after they had failed to disinfect houses in which tuberculosis patients had died, had gone to the council. Goodnow was loudest in his protests, for his pet hobby, the schools, long under his thumb, had been closed despite him.

Business men, sensing the notoriety throughout the State which would follow the closing of the schools, joined the fast increasing foes of the health commissioner. Each alderman and the mayor received many visitors. The demand was insistent that the captain be removed from office. He was hurting business.

Meanwhile the schools had remained closed. Friday morning the total number of cases stood at eighteen. Saturday morning two more were added. The captain was puzzled until stories of broken quarantine reached him. That noon he met the child of a neighbor on the street. Its home had been one of the first to bear the red card.

"Mother sent me down to the store for some coffee," the little fellow explained in answer to the captain's gentle question.

Without a word the old soldier led the boy back to his home. Nor did he speak to the mother. Arguments, explanations, commands, would be futile. He was fighting, and he knew that only action, strong, quick, certain, would win. He sensed rather than felt the storm that had risen against him, for the calls of the mayor and of the aldermen at his office had found him absent and left him ignorant of their nature. He hurried down-town and drafted seventeen men, recently thrown out of employment by a shut-down in the woolen mill, swore them in as deputy health commissioners and placed them on guard at the quarantined houses. There were two cases in each of three homes.

Papers from the State's metropolis came

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in with front-page stories of Hartland's epidemic and the notoriety drove the business men to fresh pleas with mayor and aldermen. Had the climax not come on Saturday night action undoubtedly would have followed the next day.

Captain Bennet was busy with his guards. Saturday night he employed men to relieve the day shift and, night and day, the red-carded houses were guarded. No one entered or left except the physicians.

Monday morning the storm broke afresh. Was not this insane old man not only injuring business but piling up fresh burdens for the taxpayers? The papers took up the question and interviews with the city's leading men filled three columns that morning. Each interview ended with a demand that the health commissioner be removed from office.

Captain Bennet did not see the paper. He had expected that to serve meant to work, and his duties multiplied constantly. Comments of acquaintances and the attitude of people on the streets had carried to him something of the feeling that had been aroused against him, but to his fighting spirit they brought only renewed determination. To him opposition meant a real fight, and he had been waiting, ready, for half a century.

Despite his activities the captain did not forget the weekly dinner that night. It had become a habit, through the long years, to go home in the afternoon, put on his best suit and walk down to the hotel. It was late when he started, for he had made a final round of the quarantined houses. He felt, for the first time, the weariness which the strain of the last weeks had brought. For days he had had little sleep. And with the physical lassitude came mental depression.

Max stood by the empty corner table when the old soldier approached. Captain Bennet was late but he was the first to arrive. For ten minutes he sat quietly, the lines in his face deepening, his shoulders drooping. Another ten minutes and he called Max.

"There was no message?" he faltered.

"No message, sir. Should I serve the dinner?"

The captain shook his head. For half an hour he sat motionless, one arm lying out upon the table, his eyes fixed on the cloth before him.

Suddenly he straightened in his chair. His head went up and his eyes brightened coldly. He nodded to Max and the waiter set a glass before him.

Quickly, without hesitation, the captain rose to his feet. He lifted his glass and looked at the two empty chairs across the table.

"To our next meeting."

He began bravely but the sentence ended in a sob and he sank backward into his chair, staring before him. Even Max failed to arouse him when he quietly said—

"The dinner is served, sir."

A bell-boy crossed the room to the corner table.

"A letter for Captain Bennet," and an envelope was laid beside the plate.

Eagerly the captain grasped it. Ed had been true! He tore open the message and read, only to let the paper slip to the floor.

"Newton is sick," he whispered. "He's the man I had guarding the Chalmers house nights. They were the worst about breaking quarantine."

Without touching his food he arose and went out. Tired from the fight, weary from loss of sleep and the unusual physical activity, and now numbed by the loss of his two comrades, nevertheless he stepped off quickly toward the Chalmers house a mile away.

For a while he sat on the curb, but the cold drove him to pacing the sidewalk. For hours he kept it up, walking and resting.

At midnight the door opened and an hysterical woman rushed out.

"He's dying!" she cried. "He's dying! My boy!"

Captain Bennet hurried into the house. Instinct led him to the sick room where the little fellow, gasping for breath, lay on a bed. The old soldier picked up the shrunken form and sat beside the fire, trying as best he could to still the convulsive movements of the strangling boy. Mrs. Chalmers returned to sit weeping in a corner. Her husband, his shoe-laces snapping about his ankles, ran out for a physician.

It was half an hour before the doctor arrived. He was Sprague, one of the first who had defied the health commissioner.

"Let me have him, Captain," said the physician gently as he lifted the child from the cramped arms of the old soldier.

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For a long time the captain watched the bedroom door. At last the doctor came out and Bennet read the story in his expression.

"One," he whispered. "One, and I tried so hard."

Then the muscles in his thin jaws knotted.

"But there'll not be a hundred, as there might have been!" he exclaimed defiantly.

"No, Captain," answered the physician humbly. "I admit it. I think the other doctors will too. You have saved many. We needed your action to waken us up."

THAT morning Captain Bennet was unable to rise. At nine o'clock a physician was summoned. After a few minutes in the captain's room he went out to the anxious daughter.

"It's diphtheria," he said simply. "He's old, and he's tired out. I can't give you any hope."

That noon papers from the metropolis brought stories of the devastating diphtheria epidemics in Wayne and Pineville, Hartland's two rivals. There were ninety-six cases in the one and seventy-eight in the other, with the totals growing daily. In Hartland, the papers reported, the number remained at twenty, and credit was given to the efficient measures taken by the city's health commissioner.

That afternoon's mail brought a letter to the mayor from the State Board of Health complimenting the city on the quick and successful methods it had adopted to suppress the epidemic. Wayne and Pineville wired for information as to what to do. Congratulations came from many and varied sources.

The afternoon paper, seeing the quick change coming in public sentiment, fulsomely lauded the healthful conditions of Hartland, described the methods employed to stop the spread of the epidemic and praised the work of Captain Bennet.

That night the town awakened to the fact that its "insane, fanatical," old health commissioner had put it on the map, that many homes were happy that might otherwise have been fighting the disease, and also that Captain Bennet was seriously ill. At eight o'clock a special meeting of the council, called to take action against him, was attended by diffident, rather shame-faced aldermen.

Later in the evening Dr. Pearsall met Dr. Elwell as the latter was leaving the captain's bedside.

"I want to ask a favor," he said to the younger physician. "It is unethical, but I don't care. I can't stand by and let him lie there without my help. I want you to let me help."

The younger man saw the tears in the other's eyes and led the way into the house.

"It's only a question of a few hours," he whispered as they entered.

Hardly had they closed the door before there was a step on the veranda. A gentle knock followed and John Wentworth, his bruskness gone, his bristling beard and mustache drooping, opened the door.

"You can't!" whispered Dr. Elwell. "The house is quarantined. You can't leave now."

"I don't care," replied Wentworth simply. "I had to come."

Together the old physician and the old alderman went into the sick room. The captain was sleeping. Softly the doctor felt his pulse. The sick man stirred and then opened his eyes. A slow smile spread over his face and he tried to lift a hand toward them.

"Keep quiet, old boy," whispered the doctor. "We'll pull you out of it."

The captain shook his head.

"I fought once too often," he gasped.

"No, no, Herb!" exclaimed Wentworth. "Not that! You taught us all a lesson. Tonight the council backed everything you have done."

Triumphant content recalled the slipping spirit for a moment and forced the whisper—

"I served again."

For a long time the two stood silently, watching the peaceful, happy expression on the wrinkled, wasted face.

At last the eyes opened and with his old, gentle smile the captain tried to raise his right hand.

"To our next meeting."

The silent figure relaxed. There was a sob, then quiet, while two gray heads bent over the body of the soldier.

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MARY'S LITTLE LAMB

By W. C. Tuttle

Author of "The Wisdom of Cyclops," Hair-Trigger Hollibaugh," etc.

IT HAS been said that pity is akin to love, but the feller who made that statement might just as well used the word "hate" as pity. Uh course it don't always work out—like in my case.

I hate them danged little salt-water plums what's named olives. Even if I used up all the pity in my system I couldn't work up uh case uh love on them things, and anyway yuh can't pity anything that's pickled.

I've been on the matrimonial side uh three females in my eventful life, and in each and every case there's been uh feller that they hated immensely. Me, I'm heart and fancy free, and every one uh them females is living more or less happily with them fellers they hated so well but unwisely.

Hank Padden, owner of the Seven A cow outfit, hated sheep. I reckon that Hank laid awake nights thinking of mean things to say about sheep and shepherds.

Uh feller in Helena, who liked Hank uh heap, sent him uh picture for Christmas. It was painted by hand and showed some sheep scattered over uh lovely green meadow. Hank hung it up on the corral fence and froze his trigger finger out there trying to pick out individual sheep at uh hundred yards with uh 30-30.

One bullet killed uh steer out back of the barn, but Hank said it didn't matter, 'cause he shot fifteen sheep, and fifteen to one ain't uh bad bet if yuh do lose.

It all started over uh newspaper. The way I figgers it, uh newspaper would be uh boon and uh blessing where everybody is blind or ignorant.

There wasn't no use in starting uh newspaper in Paradise. What's the use uh publishing stuff once uh week in uh community where everybody knows everybody's business every day in the week.

Me and Telescope Tolliver, Muley Bowles and Chuck Warner goes down to exchange pleasantries with the editor and tries to get him drunk enough to find out why he prints stale news.

He goes as far as he can on sody-water, while the four of us gets woolly and shoots out Mike Pelly's windows. We encourages the town to show uh little animation, while this little Jasper of uh Wilberforce

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Walton goes back to his ink-pots and publishes the exciting facts in letters yuh could read at uh hundred yards. He dilates on the deplorable fact that I puts my rope on uh Chink. He sort uh lingers long-like on the fact that I'm uh shame and uh disgrace and should be exterminated.

He didn't mention the fact that I got uh hitching-rack post in my loop at the same time, busts uh new hair-cinch and skins my classic nose. He inserts all the disagreeable details, but leaves out all the painful happenings that might get me uh little sympathy.

It didn't hurt the Chink—much. I reads his tribute to me, and it makes me so sad that I oils my gun and picks uh place to hole up in until the sheriff forgets my general description.

Uh week later the four of us is deep in the mysteries of seven-up, at two-bits uh corner, in the bunk-house, when we hears uh whoop, and in comes Hank Padden and Swede Johnson, foreman of the Seven A.

Hank has got one sheet of uh newspaper and Swede's got the other. I can see at a glance that it's the *Paradise Press*. They sets down on uh bunk and glares at us, and I can see at uh glance that the old man is some agitated.

"Did that Chink die?" I asks, sort uh offhand like, figuring that friend editor was still riding my record straight up.

"Chink ——!" snorts Padden.

He slaps that paper down on the table and plumb ruins our little game.

"Sheep!" he howls, running his finger across the paper so hard that he tears the sheet plumb to ribbons. "Sheep!"

"Y a - a - a - a - a h," bleats Telescope. "S h e - e - e - e - e - e p. In the paper? Yah."

Hank grabs the paper off the table, and works his jaws like he was masticating steak, while he reads some more. Swede seems to peruse his portion diligently.

"Now, that we're over our sheep scare we might as well resume our little pastime," opines Muley, picking the cards off the floor. Yuh couldn't tell by the looks whether this was uh shepherds' convention or uh free reading-room. I got eighteen for game, and I played low. That makes me six, and unless somebody played higher than my queen——"

"Listen to this," interrupts Hank, slapping that torn paper with his fingers. "Listen: 'It is believed that sheep will soon replace cattle on the local ranges. Since the Government has decided favorably on the sheep-versus-cow controversy in the western part of the State, it is only a question of time until the country around Paradise will produce its share of wool and mutton. *The Paradise Press* is in favor of this industry and will give its hearty support to any one who wishes to locate here.' "

"That ain't all," states Swede. "Here's another: 'Since setting up the editorial entitled, "We Want Sheep," published on page two, we have been reliably informed that certain parties have started ranging a few sheep near the mouth of Tin Cup Creek. We feel that, without a doubt, the cattle-breeders will be hostile to this new enterprise, but it is a perfectly legitimate industry and should be encouraged. *The Press* is more than willing to assist the sheep-raisers in any way and will give glaring publicity to the world if anything is done to hamper or harm the owners or their flocks.' "

"Did you play the king, Hen?" asks Chuck. "Muley claims to have played the queen, but I'll be——"

"Cards!" whoops Hank. "Play cards, with sheep on the range? You wool-wearing, sheep-loving, imitation cowpunchers. Didn't yuh hear what me and Swede read to yuh?"

"Mister Padden." Telescope Tolliver elevates his six-feet-something, and gazes down at Hank. "Mister Padden, I'm uh Kentucky Tolliver, by gad, suh! My blue-blooded ancestors arise within me when I'm chided thataway. Sabe? Dang yuh, Hank, I don't wear wool! I'm from the land uh cotton—me!"

Then Muley recites, solemn-like:

> "I loved uh shrinking little lamb,
> It wore a tinkling bell.
> I used its wool to make uh shirt,
> And it itched me plumb to——"

Muley can't help writing poetry. He weighs two hundred and forty and is so glad that he's alive that he can't help writing poetry. Chuck claims that Muley rustled some cows over in the Bad Lands one time, and uh posse got after him. He turned his bronc loose and sat down beside the Sentinel Butte. The sheriff rode all the way 'round him and headed for an eye doctor. Said he saw two buttes, and nee-dee glasses.

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"Muley," pronounces Hank, "I'm going to give yuh one more chance. Just one. Sabe? Next time you rhymes at uh time like this you're fired."

"You hadn't ought to make light uh things, Muley," chides Chuck. "This is uh solemn occasion and prose is to be used exclusively. Some day Hank will fire yuh, and then you'll have to go to work for somebody who won't treat yuh much better than Hank does. What yuh want us to do, Hank? Shall we kill the editor first or the sheep? Maybe if we kill the editor first we'll escape all that glaring publicity, eh?"

"HE'S uh danged little peaked-faced agitator, and his efforts are driving him nearer and nearer his allotment uh six feet uh earth," proclaims Swede. "If our sheriff wasn't so finicky I'd uh killed him yesterday when he asked me if I didn't think that uh shepherd was as good uh citizen as uh puncher."

"Sheep on Tin Cup!" yelps Hank. "Why, if them blatting woolies are over there it's only uh question uh time until we'll have 'em over here on the Seven A. We sure got to nip this sheep movement in the bud. Hen, you and Chuck ride over there and see how things look. Don't start nothing with them unless they gets reckless. Sabe? Just see how things look and report to me."

"Why not get some of the Triangle and Cross J to help?" asks Telescope. "Johnny Myers hates sheep and so does Whittaker."

"They can read, can't they?" snaps Hank. "If they desires to lay down and wait for me to keep 'em from being sheeped out, it's their business."

"But suppose they kills the editor before we gets uh chance," complains Chuck. "There's uh lot more joy in killing an editor than killing sheep. What do you think, Muley?"

"Well," says Muley, "it might help some. Uh course yuh got to figure that maybe the editor person is crazy on sheep, and in uh case like that it would be like killing the author of 'Little Bo-Peep.' I ain't protesting, yuh understand."

Me and Chuck saddles up and pilgrims down to the forks uh Tin Cup Crick. Chuck is the last word in physical construction. Every time I looks at his face I thinks of old Dobbin, the family horse. He's got what you'd designate as uh Roman-nosed face. He can wiggle his ears, whistle like uh scared bronc, and in fact he can do most anything uh hoss can except gallop on all four legs and eat hay. From his waist on up he's uh grown man, but his legs didn't do well. When he buys chaps he has to cut 'em off at the knee. Ananias is his patron saint.

Down in uh nice green spot near the forks we sees uh little tent, with smoke coming out of the stovepipe, so we shakes our guns loose and rides right up to the front.

"Shepherd, come forth," yells Chuck, setting sideways on his saddle, with one hand on his gun. "We have came to have serious converse with thee over thy sins."

We hears the rattle of uh pan, and then everything is still again. I pulls my bronc to one side out uh range uh that tent-flap. Yuh never can tell what uh shepherd might do.

"Come forth, dang yuh!" yelps Chuck. "Come out uh that, you measly, flea-infested, woolly-loving, locoed son of uh blat listener. Come out here in the sunlight and let me tell yuh uh few truths about you and your sheep. If yuh don't move your tick-bitten carcass out uh that rag-house immediate I'm going to cut them ropes and —my ——!"

She came out.

Chuck leans over so far that his short legs lost their grip on his saddle, and he swings plumb under that bronc's neck, like uh trapeze performer. Said bronc don't admire to be uh horizontal bar, so he rears up and falls over backwards, and Chuck lands on his back in front of the lady, where he lays and looks up at her like uh sick calf.

She stares at Chuck and then at me, so I removes my hat.

"Ma'am," says I, "it looks like rain."

She nods at me, sort uh embarrassed like, and then stares at Chuck.

"Mister Warner, get up before the lady steps on yuh," says I. "You carries your politeness to uh startling degree. It ain't gentlemanly to prostrate yourself in front of uh lady thataway. Be ordinary for uh minute and I'll catch your bronc."

"I can't make 'em raise," states the lady, foolishlike.

"Neither can I," says I. "He must uh hit hard."

"It's biscuits," she explains. "I've tried and tried."

"Forgot the baking-powder," states

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"Uh shepherd lay in the tall, tall weeds,
And pondered deep on his past misdeeds,
Uh puncher rode and pulled his gun;
The puncher said: 'I'll have some fun.'
'Get ready to die,' the puncher said,
But the shepherd merely shook his head.
'Don't waste your lead,' he said with uh sigh,
'On uh specimen what ain't fit to die.
'Don't clutter up hell with souls that bleat,
'And hobble with cactus in their feet.'
The puncher nodded and shed uh tear,
And galloped to town for uh glass uh beer."

"There's worse things than shepherds," pronounces Johnny, who don't appreciate poetry, 'cause his soul don't respond to beautiful sentiments.

"You and Hen are going, ain't yuh?" asks Weinie.

"Well," says Chuck, "we may—later on. Yuh see, me and Hen is kind uh sore about the way we been treated. Hank sends us down there to investigate, and when we don't bring back uh list of the sheep, he gets sore at us. We offers to handle the whole mess, but nobody seems to appreciate our diplomatic ability, so I reckon we'll lay doggo for uh spell. Sabe?"

"Every man to his own tastes," grunts Johnny. "Some folks can't seem to lose their love for mutton," and then the four of 'em rides away.

WE SETS there on the corral fence and watches 'em ride away. Pretty soon Chuck sighs and opines:

"Hen, there's uh difference between shepherds and shepherds, and, while I got animosity against most all shepherds, it's all in who owns the sheep. Ain't that well said?"

"Beautiful," says I. "You must uh finished school at the head of your class, Chuck," says I.

"Ahead of my class? Say, Henry, I got that beat. I finished ahead of the teacher—twenty feet ahead. Just suppose them half-witted cow-trailers go down there and take pot-shots at that lady? Ain't she got be-e-eautiful hair, Hen?"

"Uh-huh," I agrees. "I covets uh wife like her. Maybe she herds sheep, but——"

"Did you see any sheep down there?" asks Chuck.

"Come to ponder on the subject, I don't think I did. I smelled 'em—uh little."

"Smells ain't evidence. Wouldn't it be awful if they razooed her on the strength uh them smells, Henry? Let's go down there and tell her what's brewing."

"And get shot," I objects. "I'd admire to converse with the lady, but I also admire to hang on to my existence in the land of the living. She's too good uh shot to suit Henry Peck."

"Aw, I don't mean to walk right up to her. We can leave our broncs over in the gulch, and sneak down. Sabe?"

"We sure got to help her some way," I agrees, so we starts over to saddle up, but Hank Padden rides in just then and ties his bronc to uh wagon-wheel.

"Want me to unsaddle your bronc?" asks Chuck, but Hank shakes his head.

"No, I got to go back to Paradise pretty soon."

"Didn't you just come from there?" I asks, and he nods.

"Business. Got to see uh man about handling some cows."

Chuck remarks that we better wait until Hank goes back, so we won't have no questions to answer.

About half an hour later Hank comes out and walks over to his bronc. It's the first time I ever seen him with uh necktie on, and he sure looks unusual.

"Gee cripes!" snorts Chuck. "Who's been using hoss liniment?"

"Hoss liniment ——!" grunts Hank. "Jockey Club. Don't your nose recognize perfume when it smells it?"

"Does smell like uh paddock," admits Chuck. "What yuh aiming to do, Hank—make love to this cow agent?"

Weinie Lopp, Telescope and Muley rides up to the house just then and spoils Hank's pleasant reply.

"Seen anything uh Johnny Myers?" asks Weinie.

"I saw the cat eating something back of the kitchen," replies Hank. "Yuh might see what it was."

"We're worried about him," states Weinie. "When we gets close to this sheep camp Johnny opines to look it over alone so as not to give the shepherd an idea that we intends to start trouble. After he's gone about two hours we pikes along to find out what has happened. The same thing happens to us as happened to me and Johnny. Maybe they've killed Johnny."

"You fellers mean to say that Johnny Myers went over to that sheep camp and ain't never come back?" gasps Hank, and they all nods.

"You fellers stay here and let me handle

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this," says Hank. "Don't worry, I'll get him."

He slams the steel into his bronc, and away he goes hell-bent before we can stop him.

"He sure must think uh lot uh Johnny Myers," opines Telescope.

"Ain't it true," agrees Weinie. "Hank's uh feller yuh never can tell nothing about. There's just one cinch bet about Hank—he hates sheep and shepherds."

The three of them sticks so close to the place the rest of the day that me and Chuck don't get uh chance to sneak out to the sheep camp, but we frames it all up for an early start in the morning.

It's about dark when we sees Hank ride in and put up his bronc, and set down on the porch. Me and Chuck goes up and sets down, but Hank ain't pining for conversation. We gets our smokes going good, when Swede Johnson rides up.

"How about the sheep, Hank?" he asks.

Hank slides his gun around to the front, and Swede sees it and starts talking fast:

"I just rode over to tell yuh that Johnny Myers came home all right. Weinie said that you was worried about him."

"Some folks just seem to be natural crape carriers," states Hank, and slams the door from the inside.

ME AND Chuck sneaks out uh bed early the next morning, before anybody's up, and we hits Tin Cup Crick just as the sun is coming up. We sneaks easy-like down that draw and around in front of the tent.

We're standing there with guns in our hands, when the tent-flap opens and out comes that female person. She gives us one look and then turns the color of alkali.

"Oh!" she squeaks. Just like that—"O-o-o-oh!"

"Are we in time for breakfast, ma'am?" asks Chuck, wiggling his ears at her.

She sort uh breathes hard and nods her head.

"What seems to be the matter?" I asks.

"You—you ask that?" she stutters. "You—you'd shoot a gun at a defenseless woman and then have the nerve to ask a question like that?"

"We shot at you!" yelps Chuck. "At you, ma'am?"

She nods, and takes uh fresh grip on the tent-flap.

"Yes, you may have breakfast, if you wish," she states. "You'd take it anyway, so I might as well cook it for you."

"Say, lady!" Chuck waddles over in front of her. "Who in —— do you take us for? Excuse the cuss word."

"They told me that you were coming down here to kill me and my sheep," says she, with tears in her voice.

"Aw, who told you that?" I asks.

"I—I—I promised not to tell. There were two of them—at different times, of course. No, I'll not give you their names."

"How many sheep yuh got, lady?" asks Chuck, looking around over the hills.

"Just five," says she, and Chuck sets down hard on uh soap-box.

"Yes'm," says I. "Some nice little herd. How'd yuh come to start with such uh bunch?"

"Oh, I just love them," she gurgles.

"Me, too," agrees Chuck. "Some day I'm going to sell off all the Seven A cows and go in for sheep."

"Do you own the Seven A ranch?" she asks, quick-like, and Chuck wiggles his ears at me and nods.

"I suppose you own a ranch or two," says she, sort uh sarcastic like, to me, but Chuck beats me to the answer.

"Yes'm, he owns the Triangle."

"Well!" says she. "Well! Who are—er—Mr. Padden and Mr. Myers?"

"Huh!" snorts Chuck, fumbling with uh cigaret and wiggling his ears, "I wish we knowed, ma'am. We suspects 'em of being rustlers, but we ain't never been able to get the deadwood on 'em."

"Have they been here?" I asks, gruff-like, and she nods.

"Yes. Oh, I can see it all now. Just because I'm a defenseless woman, they imposed on me and lied about things. Just because some one shot a few times the other day Mr. Padden fired a number of times in the air. He said it was somebody trying to frighten me. Now I know he wasn't shooting at anybody."

"Exactly," agrees Chuck, poking his finger back and forth through the hole in his hat. "Go on."

"Well, last night Mr. Myers did almost the same thing. He shot at something, and told me the same story."

"Hank spoke of crape carriers," murmured Chuck to himself, and then to the

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lady—"Begin at the start, ma'am, and tell us how yuh happens to be here."

"To begin with," says she, "my husband——"

Chuck got up and turned 'round that box three times and then sat down again.

"Go on," says he. "Your husband——"

"My husband has always wanted to go into the sheep business but has never had money enough to start a herd. My health has been bad for some time, and the doctors advised the Montana climate. We decided that we could start with a few head, and I could live out here and take care of them. Of course it takes money, so my husband has to work to support me and the flock. Do you see how it is now?"

"Did you tell this to Padden and Myers?" asks Chuck.

"No, I didn't—not much of it. They never asked. They——"

"Whoa!" whispers Chuck. "Look out. Here comes Hank Padden now. Listen, lady; we'll slip under the back of the tent and listen to what he's got to say. Sabe? Don't lose your nerve. Remember you got friends behind the tent."

We hears him ride his horse down into the brush, and then come thumping back on foot.

The only time I ever heard Hank Padden say good morning as sweet as that was the time he went with me over to Helena to uh cattlemen's convention and drank uh quart uh champagne before breakfast.

It sure sounded like rippling water, and Chuck kicked all the skin off my ankle when I tries to imitate him in uh whisper. The lady extends Hank uh hearty greeting, and he enters the tent. He settles right down to love-making without no preliminary passes. Sure he did.

"Ma'am," says he, "I ain't nothing but an ordinary old pelican but I sure admires you uh heap. How'd yuh like to be the boss of the Seven A outfit, including yours truly?"

"Well," replies she, "I'm ordinary myself, and, while I know nothing about bossing a cattle ranch, I might consider the offer if it was made to me by the owner."

"He does," says Hank. "Everything he's got is yours, just the minute the preacher says——"

"You mean you want to marry me?" she gasps, with the accent on the "you."

"Well," says Hank, sort uh chiding like, "you didn't think I was asking yuh to marry some uh my hired help, did yuh? You're the only female person I ever seen that I'd give uh whoop for. The first time I ever seen yuh I said to myself——"

"I—I can't marry you," says she, sort uh choking like. "It—it seems so funny."

"Ha, ha," snorts Hank. "Isn't it funny?"

"You made me believe that you were protecting me," continues the lady. "All you did was to shoot holes in the air."

Chuck wiggled his ears and fingered that hole in his hat.

"Why, ma'am," says Hank, hurt-like, "if I hadn't protected yuh with my life you'd be uh ghost right now. If I hadn't uh loved yuh like uh calf loves milk you'd uh been hurt bad, and your sheep scattered to the four winds of the earth."

"Five," whispered Chuck. "Hank ain't seen the census."

"That's what the other man said," says she, and we hears Hank slide right off that soap-box.

"Other man?" asks Hank, in uh high key. "What other man?"

"He—he lied to me, too," quavers the lady. "He said he was the owner of a big farm. He—he offered to let me cook his meals."

"What was his name?" yelps Hank.

"He said it was Myers," and we hears Hank snort some loud.

"That four-flusher? That greasy complected, cross between——"

WE HEARS the *clump, clump* of uh hoss coming down the hill. Comes the *wish, wish* of whispering in the tent, and *swish*, the bottom of the tent lifts up and Hank Padden rolls into our midst.

He sets up and looks at us like we was uh new specimen of polecat. He's got uh gun in his hands, but before he can use it, we're setting on his carcass and the gun is inhabiting uh mesquite twenty feet away.

Somebody rides down into the mesquite and then comes back on foot. They tied their hoss on the opposite side uh which Hank did.

"Lay still, Romeo!" hisses Chuck into Hank's ear, when we hears Johnny Myers voice in the tent.

"Good morning, ma'am. And how are you this lovely morning?"

We don't hear her answer, 'cause Hank sunfishes with us, but all he does is to get

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his face deeper into the ground. We soothes him uh little and listen some more.

"I never thought so much about it before," we hears Johnny proclaim. "Since my wife went into the Great Beyond, from which there ain't no return ticket, I been sort of uh lonesome person. Uh man uh my position and affluence can sort uh pick and choose his mate, and that's why I been waiting for somebody like you to show up.

"You and me can go over to Helena on our wedding tower and see the sights. I still got uh lot uh clothes what belonged to my departed wife, and she was about your size. You just say the word and I'll be much obliged to marry yuh. What do yuh say?"

"I—I—I can't," says she. "I can't marry you nor anybody else. I've been lied to and bothered——"

"You been bothered?" yelps Johnny. "Somebody been bothering yuh, ma'am? Who lied to yuh, eh?"

"One said he owned the Triangle, and the other's name was Padden."

"Padden, eh?" snorts Johnny. "Was Hank Padden here? He was, eh? That blamed old woman-hating, sheep-killing wood-rat! So he had the nerve to come down here and bother you, did he? Dog-gone his measly carcass! He's the one I been protecting yuh from. He was the hombre I shot at last night. Too bad I didn't puncture his earthly envelope."

Hank hears every word, and sort uh goes limp, he's so mad.

"Where'd yuh throw my gun, Chuck?" he whispers. "Give it to me. That danged, lying, slab-sided, cock-eyed son of uh coyote ruined the cantle uh my new saddle last night. Two soft-nose bullets."

"Lay still," orders Chuck, and then we hears Johnny start to bring in the moonlight and mush.

"Please, honey, won't yuh marry me?"

"Certainly not," says she. "I can't. Just suppose I told you——"

Yeow-w-w-w-w-w! Whee-e-e-e-e! Bing! Bing! Bing! Pop, pop, pop, rattle, rattle, rattle! Yeow-w-w-w-w-w! Whoo-e-e-e-e-e!

"Ye gods and little fishes!" exclaims Chuck, peering around the corner of the tent. "Look what's coming!"

"*Rip! Swoosh!*"

Johnny Myers comes out under the back uh that tent and joins our lodge. We receives him with open arms, and then it's all that me and Chuck can do to keep Hank from taking Johnny all apart to see how he's constructed. We heaves Johnny's gun over with Hank's, and then awaits the crowning event.

You never seen such uh convention, as pilgrims up in front of that little tent. About all the riders from the Cross J, Triangle and Circle Star are there, and Muley and Telescope from the Seven A.

They got uh travois fixed up like the Injuns used to make, made out uh two long poles, fastened on each side of uh hoss, and extending way out behind. They got uh couple uh short poles fastened on cross-ways near the rear end, and on these cross-poles sets uh forlorn-looking figure. Can you imagine setting on two poles like that, and going across country behind uh wild bronc, which has good and sufficient reasons for hurrying? He can't get off 'cause he's roped on. Talk about riding uh man on uh rail. He's so dirty and ragged that yuh can't tell who he is.

The lady must uh kept inside, 'cause they rides right up to the front of the tent and gives uh war-whoop concert. The brush is thick around both sides of the tent, for which we're thankful.

"Come on out, Shep," we hears Telescope's voice ring out. "Come on out and take uh ride. Got uh nice vacant seat for yuh, Mister Blatter, and we aims to give yuh one long ride."

"We're here to pay yuh for shooting at us," yells Swede Johnson. "You want to study geography before yuh ranges sheep. You're about five hundred miles too far west. Sabe?"

"Come on out and take uh look at us," invites Muley. "We're due to start out uh this country and your presence is desired. Come on out, you locoed son of uh tick, and we'll——"

"She accepts the invite," states Chuck, in uh whisper, and I reckon he was right.

You could have heard uh rain-drop in the next county, and then I hears Telescope whistle:

"My ——! Uh shepherdess!"

"What—what do you—you want?" stammers the lady, in uh weak, scared voice.

"We—huh—well, yuh see, ma'am, it must be uh mistake," stutters Muley. "You got any sheep, ma'am?"

"Fuf-five," says she, and somebody snickers.

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"Five?" parrots Telescope. "You got five sheep? Ain't you got more than that?"

"No," says she. "There's Ann, Priscilla, Emily, Rachel and Elizabeth."

"Cripes!" snorts Chuck. "Some shepherd. Knows 'em all by their first names. No wonder Hank was sore when we didn't tell him their names."

"You see, we started on a—er—small scale," explains the lady. "My husband wanted——"

"Her husband," wonders Hank and Johnny right together, and stares in each other's eyes at short range.

"Yes'm, your husband," we hears Telescope say. "Go on."

"Mary!" squeaks the specimen on the travois. "Mary!" Comes uh swish uh skirts, and that female wails long and loudsome:

"Lambie-e-e-e-e! Oh, what have they done to my Lambie?"

"Your what?" we hears somebody ask.

"My husband!" she yelps. "Oh, Lambie, what have they done to you?"

"They—they almost killed me, Mary," he wails.

"You see, ma'am, we didn't sabe the play right," explains Telescope. "Somebody must 'a' lied. Hank Padden, the owner of the Seven A, and Johnny Myers, who owns the Triangle, are sure bitter against sheep, and they ain't—probably ain't—slept uh night since them articles came out in that paper. Yuh see, we sort uh figured that we'd settle things, and—uh—well, we're uh heap sorry. You sure ought to make your lamb—husband stop printing stuff about bringing sheep on this here range. Honest, yuh ought to."

"I will!" wails the little feller. "No more sheep for me, Mary. After all these miles on these poles I hope I never see another sheep."

CHUCK and I looks around just then and sees the rear end uh Hank and Johnny sneaking away through the brush, so we follers suit.

We catches up with them uh little further down the gulch, where they've run into five little woolly sheep. Hank and Johnny are still on their hands and knees, so we joins 'em and looks them sheep square in the eyes.

"Ann, Priscilla, Emily, Rachel and Elizabeth, I'm pleased to meet yuh," says Chuck. "I'd admire to make yuh acquainted with Hank Padden and Johnny Myers."

"Mary!" exclaims Johnny. "Them are her sheep."

"Just sheep," agrees Chuck. "Just plain sheep, Johnny. You and Hank might uh stood uh chance against them little four-legged woollies, but according to law, love and liberty, yuh never stood uh one-two-three chance against Mary's little Lamb."

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DEADLIGHT GROGAN

by David Douglas

IT WAS a ticklish business getting the lifeboat away from the *Prince Louis*, but it was nothing to the job of getting the skipper and his wife and the girl, and the crew of squareheads, off the *Record*. The gale we'd been running south with for a week or so had gone on its way—or petered out—but it left a nasty, choppy sea that tossed us about the stern of the wallowing, waterlogged bark as if we were no heftier than a cork. It was biting cold; but before we'd got half a dozen of the squareheads aboard the five of us had peeled our oilskins and jerseys and were sweating in our undershirts and trousers.

I was glad I'd brought "Deadlight" Grogan along. He was always three men for work. And this afternoon he laughed and joked like one possessed. There was always an edge to his humor, but today it was so bitter-keen that it made me wonder even in the midst of the mess we were in.

The skipper's wife and the girl wouldn't come down till just before he did, but they sent their collie dog down first, and ahead of the cook. While we labored, the girl stood on the poop-deck, just above us, hanging on to the rail, and staring down, big-eyed, at Deadlight, as if she'd been waiting for him since the woman awoke in her and told her it wasn't good to live alone. But it's small wonder she was all eyes for him. He was one of the few chaps that're built like a dreadnought and get about like a revenue cutter. He stood a goodish bit more than six feet and weighed in the neighborhood of two-fifty, but I never sailed with a man that could beat him into the cross-trees.

His face, if you looked at him from the starboard side, was so handsome it gave you a peculiar, unpleasant feeling—you sort of felt no man had a right to be so perfect-featured outside of a statue. But it hurt when he turned, full-face, and you saw his port eye-socket was empty. That's why we called him Deadlight; and it's also the why of this yarn I'm spinning. At the time I didn't know the insides of it because no one I'd ever hailed could say how he lost his eye. And no one I ever knew, either, had the nerve to ask him. Twenty-eight—or maybe thirty—he was, and usually as silent as a ship's figurehead.

We'd finally got clear of the *Record* before I realized what we were up against. As thick a blanket of fog as I'd ever seen had

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fallen suddenly upon us. It dropped just about the time we were swinging clear. Toward the last what breeze there was had died away and it began to grow warmish, but I hadn't reckoned on fog. A few minutes before, and just before the skipper came down, I'd sighted the *Prince Louis*, which had been standing off and on, waiting for us, and she was then about a quarter mile away on the lee quarter. But now, when I put my hand to the tiller, I could hardly see the fellows in the bow of the boat and I got that same kind of feeling that comes just as a man's about to drop asleep when he goes falling, falling, and ends nowhere, but just in his bunk, with a jolt that fetches him wide awake again.

We all strained our ears for the sound of the gong they'd be sure to be beating on the *Prince Louis*, but there came never a sound of it, for fog's one of the best mufflers there is. By this time we'd dropped out of sight of the *Record*. And of course I'd lost my bearings. I didn't any more know which was north than a new-born baby cares which it is. I looked at my watch and it told me it was eight bells of the first dog-watch—six o'clock ashore—and I knew it would be pitch dark in an hour.

While I was thinking it out and we were all listening hard for the gong-beat I looked at Deadlight, who was pulling the stroke oar. I shrank back a little before the blaze of hate that shot from his eye. If I'd thought it was meant for me I'd have wanted to drop over the side. But it was plain that it was bent on Owens, the *Record's* skipper. It was hot as the flame of an acetylene torch, but the rest of his face was shut tight and blank of expression as a bulkhead door. The eye was enough for me, however, and made the pit of my stomach feel like a piece of ice. And it had caught the attention of Owens, who sat on the thwart beside me, and that also of Rachel, the girl, who sat next to him.

For the moment I forgot our fix and Owens turned to me and muttered:

"What's the matter with that chap? He looks at me as if he had it in for me. My God, I never did see such a look. It—it——"

His voice sort of died out as he ran his tongue 'round his lips and turned his shoulder to Deadlight.

I shrugged my shoulders—being in the dark myself—and looked the skipper over careful for the first time. I didn't cotton to him. He was a tub of a fellow. There's a kind of red complexion that reminds you of the yolk of an egg, that's as unpleasant to see as the sort of fat that somehow tells you the chap that carries it ain't decent. Owens was handicaped against my liking him by having both these kind of things about him. Also there were lines at the corners of his lips and nose, and a set to his heavy shoulders, that bespoke the bully as plain as a lighthouse says "danger." The skin of his down-hanging cheeks was white and blotchy and pimpled.

Because of him and his thin, drab little slip of a wife that I was willing to bet hadn't even nerve enough to "sass" the cook, I wondered the more at the girl. She had the kind of real gold hair that you don't often see, and it grew down to far below her waist. When she raised her hands to twist it into a coil on top of her head—it came loose while we were getting her down—the sight of her sent a thrilling glow through me that I hadn't known in the twenty years since the night I kissed the one girl in the world, and took her in my arms and forgot, for the only time in my life, that there was either a yesterday or a tomorrow—that the world held aught else but me and the warm softness of her as her lips clung quivering to mine.

And in the purplish-gray eyes of the girl Rachel there was a sort of a hint of a challenge that seemed lurking there ready for the man her heart said was big enough to win her. About twenty she was, I reckoned, for her body had not yet come into its own, but there was a something I can't put a name to about her that spoke of the greater mental age, which exists in thoroughbred women, and comes out and surprises you when it's badly needed. And it showed plain in her face now as she sat looking at Deadlight. I read puzzlement in her look, too. I read it in the wrinkling of her forehead, and the pursing of her lips.

I'm not ashamed to admit that right then I wanted her more than anything I'd craved in many a year and forgot, for a long moment, that I was in charge of a boat full of human beings in danger; and that I was nothing but the weather-beaten, grizzled middle-aged mate of a bark who'd lost both youth, his master's ticket, and the hope of making good in the world. It was Deadlight who brought me to with—

"Where away, Mr. Burns?"

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I shivered and felt like a down-and-out who comes out of a dream of the coming-true of all his might-have-beens to the misery of a ten-cent lodging-house. My eyes were still on the girl when I muttered to myself—

"You —— old fool!"

The glint of a smile came to her eyes as the sun, in the sudden passing of a cloud, is reflected by a wave. She leaned across her father and placed a hand on one of my knees as she asked—

"Did you speak to me?"

I shook my head. I could neither speak nor smile as I quivered under the light, trustful touch of her; but it seemed that she read some of my thought in my face, for a little color crept into her cheeks as she drew back and turned her look on Deadlight again.

Well, to make short work of a long night, during which the fog held until after midnight, we didn't fetch up with the *Prince Louis*. Any one who's endured suspense in the dark will know how the hours dragged while we prayed for daylight. And we didn't any of us forget that there wasn't any grub aboard, and that the water-keg was empty save for a few brackish drops that had been left in it God alone knew how long. When it became plain that we couldn't make the *Prince Louis* in the dark or hear her fog signals we tried to find the *Record* again, but it seemed as if she'd gone down to Davy Jones's locker and so, at last, we gave up the attempt.

I remembered, too, that we were out of the steamship lanes, for both the *Record* and my own ship had been driven south and way off our courses. She was bound for Liverpool with a load of hewn timber from Port Arthur, in Texas; and we were carrying Welsh coal from Barry Dock to Rio.

"Suppose," I asked myself, "the *Prince* don't show up on the horizon at daylight?"

It was a fearsome possibility. We hadn't seen the sun for a week and we'd been running under dead reckoning. It was a month's wages to a chunk of salt horse that our skipper hadn't the latitude and longitude when the fog fell and, in spite of all effort to hold the boat steady against what I judged to be the set of the current, we might have drifted many miles and out of sight of the *Record*, if she were still afloat, during the night.

A SORT of voiceless, nervous terror sprang up among some of the men when, soon after midnight, the fog lifted as suddenly as it had fallen before the first breath of the wind that swept down upon us with barely a second or two of warning in the form of an even denser silence than that we had already endured, and in the thrall of which it seemed that the world, and we humans, had been sucked of all sound and motion.

We were broadside on to the first gust and for a moment or two the boat heeled so that we shipped a sort of water over the lee gunwale before I got her stern to it. And by then it was whistling and screaming about us so that I could barely make my voice heard above its almost vindictive clamor. It endured for perhaps two hours and then died away as strangely and unexpectedly as it had come—one of the heap of unexplainable things of the ocean.

In the calm that followed, the shroud of the night was blacker than any I had ever seen before. It lay so thickly about us that it seemed almost solid to the touch. I wanted to cry out in joy when it was pierced by a few faint streaks of light toward what we now knew to be the east'ard. When the gloom lightened so that I could see anything I looked first for the girl. She had left the seat beside her father and was among the men amidships. I could hardly believe my ears. She had begun to sing in a clear, strong contralto voice which carried none but the natural tremor in its tones. Peering forward I was just able to see that her face, uplifted to the leaden sky, was calm as the moonlit white of a sail spread full to the breeze.

She sang until the sun showed a pale, golden ball above a now almost smooth sea, and her voice seemed to gain in vigor and sweetness when, in common with the rest of us, she could see that we were alone on the surface of the water as far as the eye could reach. And she shamed the cowards among us men into at least an outward imitation of her courage. All of them, that is, except the man from whose loins she sprang.

When the blighting realization dawned upon Mrs. Owens she wailed and crept into her husband's arms. The snarl that sprang to Deadlight's lips was echoed from those of a majority of the men when Owens pushed the little woman from him with an oath. Then he rose to his feet and stood,

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with lips working soundless and a fat, nail-bitten forefinger gesticulating at Deadlight. It was a moment or two before he could drag speech from his frenzy of fear, and then he husked, desperately:

"——you, you——, don't you stare at me like that. You've been staring at me all night. I'll shoot you, by God I will, if you don't quit."

He turned to me. His pale face was like dough; and he was slobbering at the mouth. It gave me a queer feeling in my stomach to look at him.

"Make him stop it," he begged.

Before I could answer him the girl made her way aft and pushed him down on to the thwart. He seemed glad that she had come between Deadlight and himself. And then Deadlight laughed. God forbid that I should ever hear such another laugh! It brought the sweat jumping to my forehead, and my eyes with a jerk to his face. The girl whirled 'round and stared down at him with a sort of indignant wonder in her eyes. He got up and moved so that Owens could see his face.

The captain, with a hand that trembled almost beyond his control, dragged a heavy revolver from a pocket of his pea-jacket. The girl and I both reached for it, but I was the first to put my hand on it. I threw it over the side and the splash and gurgle of its disappearance thunderbolted the dead silence which had fallen upon all of us as we gazed in amazement at Deadlight.

It's a long time since it all happened, but when I close my eyes and call the scene back to memory I can see it all as clear as on that morning. The girl shrank back and down on to the thwart on which her mother sat, and put an arm about her shoulders. Behind them crouched or sat the men, for the most part heavily bearded, and uncouth in their shapeless sea togs. Deadlight alone, of us all, stood up—a huge, majestic figure with arms folded across a great, rounded chest.

In the eyes of the girl, as my glance flitted to hers for a moment, I saw an unwilling admiration. But in Owens' eyes, evidently compelled to Deadlight's face by the sailor's stronger will in spite of his effort to avert them, I read only unalloyed fear. And it was plain that he did not understand the other's attitude even though it terrorized him. For a setting there was the empty-surfaced, mid-Atlantic sea, glassily quiet and smiling coldly under the chill rays of the late Fall sun.

And then, when our regard had become strained almost to the breaking-point, Deadlight spoke in the ominously quiet tone of a strong man who's exerting all his power for repression of his anger.

"Presently I'm going to kill you," he said. "The Almighty must figure it's right I should or He wouldn't have brought us together like this."

He extended a hand in a sweeping gesture over the sea and looked upward. From Owens the breath came in a long, soughing sigh and he slipped from his place on the thwart to a crouching position in the bottom of the boat. The girl drew her mother more closely to her and her face whitened, but she made no effort to speak. As for me, I felt, somehow, as if Deadlight was speaking with the right and the authority of a judge.

"I've been waiting for many years for this moment," he went on after a moment or two of heavy silence, "and I've followed you 'round the world since I've been big enough to handle you man-fashion. Sometimes I've missed you by only a few hours; sometimes by weeks, but now——"

He reached down and grasped Owens' coat collar.

As he did so the girl released her mother and sprang to her feet, but not a man among us moved. Something bigger than any man-made law was struggling for expression in our midst and we knew it, without understanding it, as we know the sun, moon and stars. And I, who alone had the authority to interfere, could not. Something deep down in my heart told me that Deadlight had right on his side.

Owens screamed in an animal-like way—it was sickening to hear as the cry of a stuck pig—but he offered no resistance. He was too far gone with his fright. As Deadlight put his huge hands about the fellow's neck his eyes rolled in my direction in agonized entreaty, but he inspired me with disgust rather than pity. I looked away from him and at the girl. Her bosom rose and fell in response to her hurried breathing, and her hands were clenched at her sides, but that was all—she made no physical effort to stay Deadlight. But her eyes were blazing from out her white, set face and were held fixed on Deadlight, who was now looking at her over her father's head.

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In the girl's eyes was no sign of fear. In truth I can't begin to tell you all that I saw in them, but I do know that toward the end of that silent duel of two strong wills contempt at last came into her gaze, and stayed there. And all the while the only sounds were those of the heavy, uneven breathing of the men, the subdued, pitiful wailing of the frail little wife and mother, and the gurgling, horrid noises from the partially strangling Owens. Suddenly the girl turned her back on Deadlight. In the next instant he opened his hands and let Owens fall from his grip.

Then he chuckled—I can't call it anything else—and said:

"Not yet! I'm going to let you suffer with the rest of us—it would be doing you a kindness to kill you now—and then, if deliverance comes, I'm going to do for you when it's within arm's length of you."

Owens crouched against the bottom of the boat as if trying to squirm through it and Deadlight went as quietly back to his place as if nothing at all out of the ordinary had happened to himself or any of us.

IT MUST be plain by this time that I'm only an ordinary sailor with but a fairish education supplemented, maybe, by a lot of reading. And so I can't tell in detail of the happenings, or the lack of them, of the days which followed. Victor Hugo or Poe or some of the other fellows who had the power to tell of humans under tough circumstances might, but it would be ridiculous for me to try. All I'm going to say about that time is that as we all weakened, the girl and Deadlight seemed to gain in strength. It was as if the duel of wills which had sprung up between them was feeding their vitality. And although they were superhuman almost in their effort to cheer and sustain the remainder of us they didn't speak a single word to each other nor, so far as I could see, did their glances meet again.

On the fifth day, four of the men slipped over the side before we could have made any effort to stop them, even if we'd had the strength. They all belonged to the *Record*. One of them changed his mind—sort of came to his right senses for a moment when he struck the water but the fellows in the bow were too weak to pull him back and before Deadlight got there he'd lost his grip and gone under. Deadlight went over after him. He was in the water so long that I began to fear it was all up with him, too, but at last he came up empty-handed. The chap went down like a plummet, he said. All the while Owens sat without exchanging a word with any of us, jabbering to himself in a voice that was nigh to a whisper and trying to coax himself into courage enough to go over, too. But I wasn't worrying any about him.

That night it was pitch dark, with a sort of brooding sky without a star and never a sound but the moaning of some of the men. Toward midnight I fell into an uneasy, fitful sleeping that was full of dreams of the few really happy times I'd known. I must have been going on this way for maybe, two or three hours when, suddenly, I was jolted off my seat and into a heap in the boat's bottom. Looking up I saw that above us loomed the black blotch of some ship. In the instant of my realization of what she was I knew also that she was deserted. How? I don't know! There's something about a derelict that marks it as plain as weeds on a woman tell of some one dead.

"God!" cried Grogan. "It's the *Record.*"

And so it was. As we had drifted from her so we had drifted back to her, or she to us, in just the same way that I've seen a wave lift a man off a ship's deck and then drop him back again.

I hadn't realized how weak I was until we tried boarding the old bark. But for Deadlight I reckon none of us could have made it. Of us all he was the only one, although she was lying low in the water, who had the strength to go aboard hand over hand, up a rope that dangled from her forespirit, and put a ladder over the side.

Mrs. Owens and some of the men had to be hauled aboard with the block and tackle of one of the boat-falls; and even with as many hands as we could get on the rope it was all we could do to pull them up.

There was plenty of grub, of a kind, aboard the *Record* and Rachel helped me get a supply of it after we'd all drank—some of us like hogs I'm afraid. When we'd all eaten she wanted me to go aft and sleep in the cabin, but I dropped down on the deck and slept with my men about me while the squareheads went forward to their own fo'c'sle bunks.

The sun was near meridian when I woke up; and I think I'd have slept a good deal

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longer but for the hubbub. When I sat up, there was Owens with a rifle at his shoulder leveled at Deadlight, who was backed up against the bulwarks. Alongside of Owens was his mate, Larson, with a pistol in his hand. Behind them were three of the huskiest of the *Record's* crew. I looked 'round and found that my three other chaps were all awake and then I got on my feet and demanded—

"What're you trying to do, Captain Owens?"

Without taking his eyes off Deadlight, he answered—

"I'm going to put this——in irons—he's been threatening to murder me."

I hesitated for answer and while I thought quickly my glance roved the faces of the men. It was plain they didn't like their job, but from the dogged set of their faces it was plain likewise that they would obey orders. Owens, like any other skipper, was king aboard his own ship while she floated; and whatever their private opinion the men would do as they were bid. Mutiny is a nasty-sounding word at sea.

"But," I began.

"Shut up," he barked. "If you give me any of your lip I'll put you below in irons, too."

"Like —— you will," growled Stevens, bo'sun of the *Prince Louis*, who stood close to me.

Owens turned to mark the man who had spoken and in that instant, like a flash of lightning, Deadlight was upon him. They went to the deck with a crash. As they did so the rifle spat and a strand of the ratlines, half-way up to the cross-trees, parted where the bullet hit it.

Larson hesitated. It was plain that he didn't want to shoot Deadlight, but to save his own face he must get into the scrimmage. I tapped him on a shoulder.

"Better not butt in," said I. "We're going to stand by my man. You're a lot of dogs if you go against us. We're in this mess because we tried to help you——"

But Stevens settled the question by snatching the weapon from Larson's hand and my other two fellows got in between the squareheads and Deadlight and Owens. By this time Deadlight was on his feet again, with the rifle in one of his hands. He kicked Owens, but not very hard.

"Get up and get aft and stay there till I'm ready for you, you swine," he ordered.

"For shame—for shame, to kick an old man when he's down."

The crimson showed even on Deadlight's tanned face and neck, but he looked boldly up at the girl, with a lift of his chin and shoulders. We were all in the well-deck and she was looking down at us from the head of the poop companionway. I could see that she was trembling—with anger, I thought—and she gripped the rail so tightly that her knuckles showed white. Then, without a word, Deadlight turned away and walked forward. I climbed the companionway and went up to the girl.

"Your father was going to put him in irons," I said, "and he would have shot him to do it, if necessary, if he hadn't submitted."

"Oh," she faltered, and then her face tinted with a rush of blood, "I—I didn't know that, but he shouldn't have kicked him."

She hesitated for a little while and her eyes were clouded when she went on—

"What d'you suppose, Mr. Burns, is behind his fearful hate of my father?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Why don't you ask *him?*" I returned.

"I have," she answered, "but he says that he doesn't know."

"He's lying," I answered roughly. "And I'm thinking that whatever happens he's got it coming to him. If I were you I'd tell him to keep out of Deadlight's way. I'll do what I can to protect him because I'm Deadlight's superior officer and, anyway, I like the chap and I don't want to see him swing for murder."

Her eyes fell from mine and her face had paled again when she commenced on another tack—

"Then you think there's a chance that we may still be saved?"

"Think!" I answered, more cheerfully than I felt. "I don't think—I know. I've seen water-logged craft in worse shape than this old tub that floated for years. The *Prince Louis* is bound to find us sooner or later and a steamer's liable to pop up over the horizon any minute. How's your mother this morning?"

The tears flooded her eyes. She shook her head, without words.

I was about to question her, but Owens was coming near to us. He scowled at Rachel and me, and motioned to her to go below.

"Just a minute, Captain," said I. "I

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don't want any trouble with you, but I want you to put it down in your log that I'm within my rights when I protect my men. You act half-way decent and I'll do what I can to keep Deadlight in his place."

A devil looked at me out of each of his eyes and he fell to trembling so that I doubt he could have spoken even if he had wanted to. Fear in a man's the most loathsome thing I know of to look at. I nodded to the girl and turned away. Presently she came on deck again and invited me to go aft to eat, but I thanked her and said that I intended to mess with my own men.

I didn't see Owens again that day and I spent the rest of the time before dark in looking the *Record* over. There'd have been no use trying to pump her out because she'd only fill right up again and, anyway, the timber in her would keep her afloat except in case of a really heavy storm.

I WAS asleep the next morning in the deck house, in the bunk of the carpenter, one of the men who'd gone over from the boat, when Stevens came in and roused me.

"Shake a leg," he said, in a hurry. "The skipper's missin' and the girl wants to see you right now."

I tumbled out of the bunk and into my togs, asking all sorts of questions as I did so, but all he could answer was—

"I don't know anythin' but that he ain't nowhere aboard."

She met me, white-faced and white-lipped, just outside the door.

"Father's gone," she cried. "I've searched everywhere; and so have the rest of the men. Oh how—" she wrung her hands—"how can I tell mother——"

She began to shake with a storm of hard, dry sobs that pierced my heart. I put a would-be comforting hand on her shoulder and patted it gently.

"Come," I said. "Let's take another look. He may have hidden himself somewhere through fear of Deadlight."

I tried to speak confidently, but I did not feel so. Suspicion of Deadlight had entered my mind as soon as I learned that Owens was missing. The two might have met somewhere on deck during the night and in a sudden flare-up of passion Deadlight might have done what he was evidently set on doing sooner or later. I couldn't believe that Owens had gone over of his own accord.

Rachel flashed me a brave little look and brushed the tears from her eyes before she shook her head and answered:

"No! we've searched from stem to stern, and he couldn't have hidden in either of the holds because they're battened down tight——"

"And he couldn't have fallen overboard of himself for 'twas a dead calm," said Larson, who stood behind the girl. "Miss Rachel says he come on deck for a smoke late last night and she never saw him again."

I turned a questioning look on the girl. She nodded.

"It's true," she added. "He came on deck as Mr. Larson says. I was in my berth but I heard him go up the companionway and then tramp up and down the deck over my head for a few moments, and then I fell asleep and didn't miss him till the cook brought breakfast aft, at eight bells this morning. I thought at first he might be in the stateroom with mother——"

At this mention she choked and the tears came afresh.

I turned to Stevens.

"Tell Grogan to come here," I ordered.

He appeared in a moment or two. While the other fellows had loafed and slept on the day before he had washed his shirt and trousers and borrowed a razor from one of the *Record's* crew. As he appeared in the bright morning sunlight he was the only decent-looking man among us all. His fair hair added to the effect of the cleanliness that shamed the rest of us. And again I saw the gleam of grudging admiration in the girl's eyes as from beneath her long, dark golden eyelashes she watched him approach; and then her face hardened till her jaw and cheek muscles stood out in hard, unbecoming lines.

"Grogan," I said. "Have you heard that Captain Owens can't be found?"

He nodded his head, without any change of the brooding expression of his face.

"Do you know anything about it?"

I felt, even as I put the question, how foolish it was. And I could see that it took all he had in him to hold himself in.

"What should I know about him?" he said through his teeth. "When I did for him I intended to do it open and aboveboard——"

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"You liar—you cowardly murderer. You——"

She sprang upon him like a tigress, but he made no effort either to avoid or check her. Across the white of his face, blanched by her words, appeared the red print of the open hand with which she struck him; and drops of blood began to drop from his lips, bruised against his teeth. Then, in a sudden reflex of emotion, the girl slumped, sobbing, to the deck.

"In God's name, man," I demanded, "what had he done to you that you should have done this thing?"

I could not doubt but that he was guilty. I was hurt that he should deny it. If he had killed Owens in open, fair fight, I think that I could have admired him in the doing especially in view of that feeling I've already spoken about that he had some big justification. But to push a man overboard in the dead of night—to steal upon him unawares as has so often happened at sea—that was another matter. I could see my feeling reflected upon the faces of the men clustered about us.

"What has he done to me?"

I shrank back a little before the look he gave me as he repeated the question.

"Listen," he went on, with his eyes turned again to the sea. "I went aboard his ship for my first trip as an apprentice kid just turned into my teens. There were six of us, and he made life hell for us as he has for every man or boy who ever sailed with him. But he didn't frighten me—he only made me hate and despise him, and he came to understand how I felt; and he tried to break my spirit."

He halted and looked down at the girl with an expression that I could not fathom. She had ceased her sobbing and while she still crouched upon the deck I could see that she was intent upon his words.

"I come of a long line of sailors," he went on, his voice crisp as the snap of the sails when you go about before a stiff wind, "every one of whom had been officers in the navy or merchant marine for hundreds of years. I'd sooner be captain of a real ship than king of England. Well—" he gave another of his unutterable laughs—"just before we got to Melbourne he caught me, one night, reading a book beside the cabin skylight. I was lying on the deck—it was against the rules for me to be there at that hour. He kicked me in the face——"

"Oh—Oh!" cried the girl.

Not in a million of words could she better have expressed her horror, her realization of the feeling that had been smoldering in his breast through all the years which had elapsed since that night. She sat up and covered her face with trembling hands. Deadlight smiled bitterly down upon her before he continued:

"You'll have guessed the rest. They had to take one eye out when I got ashore—the other was so injured that I couldn't pass the tests. If I wanted to keep on going to sea it had to be in the fo'c'sle and—" he turned his face out to the sea again—"I wouldn't tell the hospital people how it happened. I had taken an oath to kill him myself when I grew big enough. And now——"

He wheeled abruptly and disappeared within the fo'c'sle-head.

TEN days passed like an Eternity of time. Fortunately it was dead calm. Or perhaps it was unfortunate, for that was the reason the *Prince Louis* did not pick us up until the morning of the eleventh day. During the night a pretty stiff breeze had escaped from the Almighty's wind locker and at daybreak we sighted each other. Afterward I learned that she must have been within a hundred miles of us all the time.

During these ten days, Deadlight exchanged no word with any of us and kept to the fo'c'sle-head. I talked often with the girl but she never mentioned him. Often, however, I caught her glance upon his solitary figure as he paced to and fro of the fo'c'sle-deck and it seemed to me that even his story had not broken her hate and contempt for him. The old lady never came on deck. Rachel said that she would hardly permit even her to stay more than a moment or two in her stateroom. When told of her husband's disappearance she had just turned her face to the bulkhead and murmured, brokenly, that she had expected that this would happen.

Jamieson, second mate of the *Prince Louis*, was in charge of the boat that came across to help fetch us. I ordered the crew of the *Record* to go with him. My own men had drawn the boat we had passed so many fearful nights in alongside—we had let it drift by the stern. When the other men had all gone down and while we were waiting

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for Rachel to bring her mother up—she had said that she did not need any help—I hailed Deadlight. I wondered at his conduct. He stood, motionless, on the fo'c'sle-head.

"Get a move on you," I shouted. "The women will be up in a minute."

"I'm not coming," he answered so quietly that I could barely hear what he said. "I'm going to stay here——"

"What—what—" I blurted as I walked forward, completely flabbergasted. "Don't be a fool, man."

He laughed; he might as well have groaned.

"I'm going to stay here——"

"But you can't," I cried. "You've got to come along. I order——"

For answer he raised the rifle he had taken from Owens from behind the capstan. He did not speak and his face was expressionless as the deck he stood on. But I felt, somehow, as powerless before the determination that radiated from him as is a ship running, with bare poles, before a gale. I knew that to take him would involve sacrifice of life even if I could spare the time the attempt might take.

The barometer was falling rapidly. By the look of the sky and the feel of the wind we were due for a northeaster. But it galled me to think of leaving him. There was a chance that, after all, he was innocent and, anyway, deep down in my heart, I had great pity for him. If ever a fellow had been given a raw deal by life he was the one. I was standing at the foot of the fo'c'sle ladder, debating my course, when I felt a light touch on my arm. It was that of Rachel.

She was alone and she read my thought as I looked beyond her.

"Mother will be up in a few minutes," she said. "She's locked in her stateroom doing I don't know what. She told me to come on deck and wait for her and to ask you to send—" she broke off and nodded toward Deadlight—"him in the other boat."

I laughed bitterly.

"I'm afraid," I said, as I faced toward Deadlight again, "that I'm not going to send him in any boat. He says he's not going. I suppose he thinks he might's well take a chance here as go ashore and take one in a murder trial."

I turned sharply toward her again, hardly believing my ears. She had uttered a gasping moan.

She stood with hands grasping her heaving breasts and widely staring eyes fixed upon Deadlight, who was gazing out across the white foam-flecked waves at the *Prince Louis*.

"But, but," she cried, pantingly, "you can't leave him—here. It would be—murder. He may not be guilty. He—oh, what *can* we do?"

I shrugged my shoulders, helplessly, wondering greatly at her agitation. It had seemed to me that this would be an easy way out of the thing for her since she seemed to hate Deadlight so greatly.

"I don't see what else there is to do," I said at length. "He's armed. It's his own deliberate choice. And even without arms he's a match for any three of us."

For what seemed a very long time she stood staring silently up at Deadlight and then, suddenly, she started up the ladder. He must have heard her coming, but he did not turn toward her. I followed close behind her.

But when she stood beside him her resolution, whatever it was, seemed to have failed her. She stood with downcast eyes, the red ebbing and flowing in her cheeks, and trembling lips.

For a while Deadlight remained silent and still. It was very quiet. The murmurings of the men in the boats seemed very far away; the lapping of the waves against the *Record's* wooden sides seemed a fit accompaniment to the somber little tragedy. Suddenly I came to the knowledge that these two loved each other, mightily, but that a barrier the Almighty alone could remove stood between them. My heart ached for them and myself, for I, too, loved this girl who stood now gripped and racked by a situation almost unparalleled in human experience.

I do not know how long she stood there—I had lost all count of time—with the wind whipping the loose strands of golden hair about her working features and her fingers clutching at her bosom as if she would willingly have torn her heart out that its agony might be lost in the fathomless depths of the sea.

At last Deadlight, as if compelled by some unseen force stronger than himself, turned his face down upon the girl. For a moment he endured her straining regard without

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show of emotion; and then he fell to trembling so that he had to lean back against the capstan.

The pent-up tears welled suddenly from her eyes.

"If you had only been man enough to forgive him," she cried. "How I could—how I could—" she raised her head proudly, defiantly—"how I could have loved you."

Deadlight's hands clenched suddenly and he choked. Then he snatched his cap from his head, threw it to the deck, and said, slowly and solemnly:

"Before God, I'm not guilty of anything but evil thought against your father." He pointed aloft. "I know no more what happened to him than the gray gull on the yardarm up there."

His voice trailed off into silence as his eyes came back, hungrily, to her face.

Then came a silence in which my heart beat distinctly as the ticking of a watch in the dead of the night.

"I—I—believe you," she said at last, in a dull, dead voice, "but——"

"If he were here now," he said in a low husky tone, "I would forgive him—for your mother's sake. I've come to see that his punishment is up to God. Since I've known you I'm different somehow. I——"

He grasped her suddenly in his arms and strained her to him. I do not know what he had read in her face. As their lips met I turned my back upon them. I was blinded with a sudden rush of salt, smarting tears—the first my eyes had known in many and many a year. Let them have this moment, I thought. Its memory would be the only sweet they would know through many bitter years, if they both survived. To take Deadlight meant to take him into captivity. The evidence against him was only circumstantial, but it was damning. If I took him I had no alternative but to turn him over to the police when we should come to port.

But the wind was freshening at a lively pace and a swirl of spray from the weather side brought me back to the urge for action. They had drawn apart when I turned upon them. After a fleeting look at the agony of their faces my eyes fell to the deck.

"No," Deadlight was saying, "I shall stay here. The shadow of doubt would always lie between us unless I could prove that I didn't do it even if I came clear of the law."

A dry, shuddering sob shook him from head to foot. He turned from her and laid his face on arms folded on the capstan head.

"My dear—my dear—" she whispered and turned to me.

I thought her about to fall and had put my arm about her waist to support her when, suddenly, she stiffened in my grasp and gave utterance to a glad, ringing cry.

Deadlight whirled sharply 'round, as I did myself. For a few moments we stood staring aft, hardly able to believe the evidence of our sight. On the poop deck stood Mrs. Owens, and beside her stood the captain.

For a moment it seemed to me that Rachel must have known the truth all along. But in the next moment I saw my mistake, and my certainty that she had not was confirmed when, suddenly, and without warning, she fainted in my arms. Like the thoroughbred she was she had appeared all steel nerves and sinews in time of danger and necessity, but when it was all over she became all woman again.

And the frail, insignificant-looking little old woman, whose intelligence I had despised, had the master mind of us all. It was she who conceived the idea of hiding Owens and pretending that he had disappeared in order to throw Deadlight off the track and thus cheat him of his proposed vengeance. Whenever it became necessary for Rachel to enter the stateroom Owens had hidden beneath the lower bunk. In the night the little woman had stolen forth and made raids on the cook's pantry in the cabin. And she had rightly judged it better not to take the girl into her confidence lest, having to face us all so many times each day, she would not be able successfully to carry on the deception.

Ah, well, it's all ancient history now. Deadlight is Deadlight no longer and he wears a glass eye. The oldest boy, William Burns Grogan, Jr., has just gone through college and is about to assist his father in the superintendency of their prosperous little ship-yard.

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THE GOLDEN USHABTI AFFAIR

by William A Shryer

Author of "Old Colonel Ptolemy"

A LARGE prosperous-looking limousine slid to the curb and, with a slight tendency to skid, was stopped suddenly in front of the unsightly antiquated building occupied as Detroit Police headquarters. With an automatic gesture the driver leaned to the left and stopped a taximeter with which this rather unusual conveyance was equipped.

With a furtive backward glance the large burly chauffeur leaped from the driver's seat, slipping slightly on the sleet-covered sidewalk. Quickly recovering himself, he squared his broad shoulders with a semblance of bravado, slightly belied by the nervous tremor of his hard ugly undershot jaw. With a determined narrowing of his eyelids he pulled down the visor of his driver's cap and ran up the steep flight of steps with athletic stride.

"Where's de lieut?" he demanded truculently, of a patrolman lounging in the hall.

"In 'is office, where else do you suppose he'd be?" he was answered with equal politeness.

With a look of disdain the chauffeur strode to a door at the left, and knocking, entered the room without further ceremony. To the large bluff individual carelessly reading an evening paper behind a battered oak desk the intruder addressed himself.

"'Lo, Lieut. Got a little prize package for you in my car out here. Some Italian I picks up at the M. C. Station. He tells me to hustle 'im out to a hotel near the car barns on Jefferson, and when I gets there he's dead as a fish. Somebody tops him on the way, so I beats it right down here."

"What's that?" yelled the officer galvanized into sudden action. "Look here, Buck, seems to me you're goin' it pretty strong. You may be there with the drag, but you can't pull that kind of stuff and expect to get away with it. Just say that again, and if it's a gay line you're trying to pull, beat it. I'm busy."

"This ain't no joke a-tall, Lieut," retorted the man with an assumed look of injured innocence that but illy fitted his hard predatory countenance. "It's just like I tells you. Dis gink gets in at de station in a —— of a hurry wid a sad little skirt, and when I at last finds de place to stop at, dere he is, topped off sure as grief, and de dame missin'."

"Come with me," directed the officer with a look of suspicion. "We'll just see what this cock-and-bull story amounts to."

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Slipping into his coat as a protection against the still occasional flurries of sleet the lieutenant grasped the arm of his caller significantly, and the two descended to the street. The chauffeur turned a switch near the meter and directed the officer to step within the brightly lighted body of the machine. Slamming the door behind him he followed the lieutenant into the roomy tonneau, which was protected from outside curiosity by the tightly closed shades at every window.

Huddled in the back seat reposed a still, awkwardly sprawled figure. A touch convinced the officer that the man was dead. His overcoat was thrown back, and a slit in his new, but rather poorly-fitting sack coat, suggested the cause of death, as its clean-cut edges were soaked with blood. The body was that of a dark, swarthy man, undeniably handsome in an Oriental way, with long silky eyelashes, a curly brown mustache and a ruddiness of cheek that even in its pallor contrasted harmoniously with the dark olive skin.

"Hell's bells," sputtered Lieutenant Reed. "You take it from me, Buck. This will want a lot of explaining. Get out," he continued. "We'll run this stiff over to the morgue and take a good look at him where there's better light."

Accepting this order with perfect nonchalance the driver soon landed the officer at the suggested destination, where the body was carried within and deposited on a marble slab. In the better light little further disclosed itself to the close scrutiny of the police officer, however. The outside clothing removed disclosed a narrow clean-cut wound just over the heart, from which considerable blood had flowed, soaking the clothing almost to the waist. The entire outfit worn by the victim seemed new and good, but of no expensive quality, nor with any identification marks to show its origin.

A search of the victim's pockets disclosed very few exhibits of the slightest interest or value. There were a box of short matches, a box of Egyptian cigarets about half gone, an old silver Swiss watch, such as is rarely seen in this country, with a chain of gold-plate equally unfashionable. From one of his side pockets a string of amber beads, decorated with silk tassels, was taken. This object was declared to be a rosary by the detective.

The only other item anywhere to be found on the person of the dead man was a small card, on one side of which was written in a peculiar slanting chirography "Oriental Hotel, 118 Jefferson." On the reverse was written a name and address that caused a sudden start on the part of the examining official. It was in the same handwriting and read—

Mr. J. Simms, 67 Burlingame Avenue.

"Hum," mused the puzzled Mr. Reed. "Now what in —— does this card with the name of old Josiah Simms mean?"

Finding no apparent answer from either within or without his slow-moving police mind he turned to the chauffeur.

"This guy didn't come off a train without no baggage did he, Buck?" he inquired.

"Nope," answered the quietly watchful taxi driver. "He has a big telescope. De skirt has a smaller one. I pays no attention to them, though. May be dey're both in de cab right now."

Turning hastily as if to verify this supposition he started for the door, to be quickly joined by the suspicious lieutenant, who followed close at his heels to the empty machine. Getting within, the two men threw back one of the extra front seats, and beneath reposed a long, bulging telescope of rather ancient vintage. It was a dirty-gray in color, fastened with two wide straps, to one of which was affixed a small padlock which prevented the unfastening of the clasp.

Grasping the black leather handle the lieutenant started to lift the grip from the floor of the machine, when its sudden feeling of lightness caused him to drop his burden and carefully roll it over on its side. As he did so a long slit was noticed in the bottom, through which a goodly portion of the contents had started to slip as the officer had first attempted to lift the case.

"Now who's rifled this bag?" demanded Reed savagely of the unresponsive chauffeur.

"You can search me, Lieut," replied the chauffeur somewhat uneasily. "After finding the stiff like dat, I beats it right down here, you can take it from me."

With a look of incredulity the officer carefully stuffed the protruding contents of the grip through the slit in the bottom and motioning the chauffeur to precede him, carried his burden within. Owing to the length of the sharp cut in the bottom of the

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telescope it was an easy matter to extract its entire contents, which gave every evidence of having been extracted before, and stuffed back with no regard for order or neatness.

A CAREFUL examination of the entire display, however, failed to afford the lieutenant any particular cause for enthusiasm. The grip had been crowded, but with few exceptions its contents proved to be wearing-apparel of little or no real value. Underclothing, for the most part clean and well cared for, predominated, mostly of a somewhat cheaper quality than that worn by the dead man, but evidently the same sizes. There were also a woman's skirt, several waists and a corset. A number of variegated neckties and an Oriental piece of needlework almost seven feet square, afforded a touch of color to the mass. There were also several rolls of dirty linen.

Unwrapping one of the latter the officer came upon a small pasteboard box tied with a piece of coarse string. The contents of this box both surprised and perplexed the officer. It was of some light-green material resembling stone, was wrapped in cotton, stood about five-inches high and suggested a small imitation mummy. There were rough cabalistic figures in black down the front of this object.

"Well, what in heck do you reckon that's supposed to be?" inquired the policeman of nobody in particular. "Hello," he exclaimed, unrolling a second small bundle of dirty linen. "Here's another heathen image just like the other, only white."

The second object proved very similiar in size and design to the first, but its composition was decidedly different, being cut apparently out of a substance resembling transparent marble.

"Well," exclaimed Reed, after contemplating the sum total of the telescope's evidence. "I can't say we're much better off for having pawed over this junk. You come with me, Buck, we'll just run back to the office for a little chat together."

Giving instructions to a subordinate to inform the detective department of the murder, and requesting that one of the detective bureau be sent to his office, the lieutenant, following the somewhat apprehensive chauffeur, left the morgue and drove back to headquarters in the handsome taxi.

The two found a plain-clothes man already awaiting them, and to the latter the lieutenant detailed the information afforded by the chauffeur, as well as outlined the results of their investigation at the morgue.

"Buck's a bad actor," commented the plain-clothes man, as though the subject of his remarks were not present at all. "Looks to me like a little solitary couldn't hurt him none—might jog his memory at that."

"Aw, nix on that chatter, Levy," responded the unperturbed chauffeur with a sneer. "You guys just naturally can't open yer traps without spilling a lot of bunk. If you dubs got the nerve to pull any of that stuff on me—roll over, your foot's asleep. It's dead open and shut—if I wanted to top a guy, and a yap at that, d'ye think I'd take the trouble to cart 'im down to ya and ask youse to land me in stir fer it? Nix! Fergit it! Ask yerself—what'd I do? Why, beat it two blocks furder to de crick and roll 'im over. Fat chance youse guys 'ud have to hang it on me, I don't think!"

Impressed with the logic of this statement, the lieutenant scratched his chin and asked—

"What time did you pick this guy up, Buck?"

"I'm tellin' ya. I picks him up right after the eight-ten train from New York rolls in. Buff, the doorman, can tell ya."

"Well, how does it come that you don't get him down here till almost ten o'clock?" queried the officer sapiently. "It wouldn't take more than a half-hour to run out to the car barns, and the way you push that bus I'll bet it didn't take you twenty minutes. Couldn't take you more than fifteen more to get back here. How about the rest of the time, huh?"

"Well, Lieut," grinned Buck engagingly. "Dat's a real bright question and I gives you credit. I gets a blow-out right by the water-works. I finds my spare is leaky, so hobbles into the garage two or three blocks this side and cements a tube. Fact is I cements 'em both, and good thing I does, for about at the bridge, *bluey*—she shoots again, and I has to change right dere."

"You got a good alibi, Buck," sneered Levy. "But them's your specialty. You just hold this bird right here, Lieut, and I'll run out to the M. C. station and get a line on this dope he's handed out. I'll be back inside an hour."

The protesting Buck was led away to a

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retention cell, while the plain-clothes man hastened to the railroad station. With no difficulty he secured a confirmation of the story told by the taxi chauffeur. The important negro on duty at the front door remembered perfectly having met the taxi as Buck drove up, for its occupant had tipped him with a quarter. Just as Buck was about to withdraw, a couple hastened from the station and hailing the departing taxi jumped in with a direction the doorman did not hear.

Succeeding developments were clearer in his mind, however, for the departing taxi had hardly climbed the sloping approach to the main automobile entrance when a pair of excited men, darker even than the departing couple, ran out of the station and gazed after the speeding taxi with waving arms. The older and more excited of the two men yelled for a Yellow Bonnet and, pushing his companion into the machine, gave directions for the chauffeur to follow the preceding cab with all haste.

The description of both sets of passengers evinced a watchful attention on the part of the negro. His description of the man later driven to headquarters dead was convincingly accurate. He described the man's companion as a small, dark woman with a wealth of black hair and large beautiful black eyes.

The pursuing couple, he gave as his opinion, were certainly Orientals. He thought they might be Arabs, or East Indians. They were almost as dark as "colored gentlemen," but were not negroes. Their hair was straight, their noses somewhat curved, both had copious mustaches, and the older a large wart near his nose, with long hairs growing from it that particularly impressed the negro as unusual.

With this information the detective returned and reported to Lieutenant Reed.

"You better take a run out to the Oriental Hotel and see just what sort of a dump it is. You might ask whether they expected any such couple as the dead man and the woman who left the station with him. It is possible that this dame may have topped the guy and made her getaway. I quizzed Buck after you left and he said he had to slow down four or five times on account of the slippery pavement, and especially at street car intersections. He admitted the woman might have slipped out easily enough and he never be the wiser. He was too busy skidding most of the time to think about his passengers. He claims, too, that they pulled down the curtains the minute they got in."

"I'll just tip 'em off to let us hear at once if the dame does show up at that hotel. She might, you know, at that," replied the capable Levy, leaving for East Jefferson Avenue.

After a few minutes in thought the lieutenant directed that Buck be brought before him.

"Levy checked you up, Buck, and finds you give us the right dope. I called up the Jefferson Garage and they say you did fix a tire there. I don't know as we've got anything on you, so I'm going to let you go. But remember, no monkey business. When I send out word I want to see you, you come. See?"

"Sure. Why not?" responded Buck, insolently. "You ain't got a thing on me, and if you put out a rap on me I'd get sprung in three hours. I didn't say nothin', 'cause I knew you'd wake up. So long. You knows where to get me whenever you wants a little help."

AFTER the departure of the impudent chauffeur, Lieutenant Reed mulled over the case with some misgivings. He hardly credited Buck Powers with an innocence as real as apparent, but realizing the strong political influence of this fearless gangster the step he had taken in liberating him did not cause any anxiety. Buck Powers was the acknowledged leader of a "strong arm squad." The uses to which his privately owned taxi had been put all too frequently were well known to the police, but on no occasion had it been possible to "get him with the goods."

It was no unusual experience to receive almost nightly calls from quarters more or less disreputable and to arrive somewhat tardily to discover a scene of devastation that beggared description. The "strong arm squad" rarely did things by halves, and for fifty dollars any individual with a grudge might be assured of a clean-up job worthy of all praise, so long as the selected victim boasted no particular political power, or better still dwelt and had his being among surroundings slightly beyond the pale of the highest recognized social standards.

The murder of a man while riding in a taxicab, and the discovery of the crime in

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the manner reported by Buck reflected certain elements hardly reconcilable with the acute perceptions possessed by the wary Buck, yet, as the officer admitted to himself, it might have happened, and in the absence of further evidence a policy of watchful waiting commended itself to the cautious Reed as the most politic under the circumstances.

Relieved at midnight it was not until the next day at about ten that the lieutenant received the report of Detective Levy. That faithful worker reported that an automobile resembling Buck's had been seen to stop in front of the Oriental Hotel about nine o'clock the night before. A Greek bootblack volunteered this information, but could add nothing further except to say that the driver of the car had alighted, opened the door and stepped in, emerging a few seconds thereafter to start his machine and drive rapidly in the direction from which he had come.

The Oriental Hotel was on the second floor of the building occupied by it, and investigations there were not fruitful. No couple was expected. Nor was any individual answering to the description of the dead man looked for. In fact the house was filled for the most part with "foreigners," and, to judge from the appearance of several seen by the detective, they were Armenians or Syrians, between which there was little or no choice in his eyes.

The proprietor of the hotel was a Greek, and had promised to notify Levy immediately should any one call for a lodger answering to the description of the dead man. He was carefully instructed to advise any possible inquirer that the man had asked for a room on the night in question, who, on being told nothing was to be had, promised to call later for accommodations that were to be afforded him the next day or the one following. Through this course the detective expected to secure a line on any possible caller, although he expressed no overabundance of enthusiasm as to any Greek cooperating with the police to the extent so willingly promised.

After commending the subordinate on the thoroughness of his endeavors the lieutenant reflected on the possibilities of developments in other directions, which naturally suggested the card found on the victim. He decided that having been put in possession of such an admirable excuse for approaching old Josiah Simms it would be folly to delay availing himself of it. For to Mr. Reed there was something uncanny about that old gentleman's ability to solve criminal tangles, which to the lieutenant were as blank of suggestions as a treatise on the fourth dimension.

Acting on this thought the lieutenant called up a number on the Hemlock exchange and after a certain circumlocution, which to his official mind reflected the necessary amount of diplomatic palaver, made an appointment to call on the little old man at eleven o'clock that morning.

To Mr. Josiah Simms there was nothing of the diplomat about Lieutenant Reed. His mental peregrinations were as clear to the keen old man as though a chart accompanied them. Moreover, it was with a certain amount of subconscious expectation that Mr. Simms looked forward to a call from the lieutenant about once in so often, for scarcely a month elapsed without some excuse being given by Reed for an assistance he would have died rather than admit as at all necessary, or as highly prized as his actual need usually predicated.

In the present instance the officer armed himself with the card taken from the dead man, pocketed one of the small figures found in the baggage of the victim, and promptly at eleven o'clock banged the knocker of the spotless white door of Mr. Simms' attractive home on Burlingame Avenue. Admitted at once by the faithful maid Ellen, the lieutenant was ushered into the well-stocked library of Mr. Simms, which in spite of his many calls there never failed to impress the officer with a feeling of considerable admiration.

Before retiring at sixty from a most lucrative criminal law practise, to "enjoy the remainder of his youth," Mr. Simms had possessed the most complete criminal-law library in the city, and in spite of his retirement the additions to this part of his collection had suffered no decrease. Moreover, for a complete library on Egyptian and antiquarian subjects generally, none could excel the careful selections of Mr. Simms, whose own knowledge of ancient peoples and their customs exceeded by far the erudition reflected in many of the volumes that weighed down his numerous mahogany book shelves.

On the entrance of Lieutenant Reed the little old man, clad in his old-fashioned

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alpaca coat and large carpet slippers, removed his large steel-rimmed spectacles, which he rubbed vigorously with his large silk pocket handkerchief. Arising with marked politeness, he closed a large flat volume, a beautiful reproduction in the natural colors of the Papyrus of Ani, and bowed with mock seriousness.

"Well, well, Reed," he greeted his visitor. "In trouble again, I reckon, eh?"

"Oh, no, not this time, Mr. Simms," swelled the lieutenant importantly. "Picked up a murdered man last night and he had a card on his person with your name on it. Knew you'd want to know about it, so I hustled right out the first chance I got."

"Humph," responded Mr. Simms doubtfully. "Very considerate of you, I'm sure. Let's see it."

The spry little old man took the proffered card and examined it carefully through his large-rimmed spectacles.

"Humph," he snorted. "Nothing much about that that I can see. Go ahead and get it off your chest. You can't fool me, you know. You are up against something, so get to the gist of the action. I can't waste all day on you police duffers."

In spite of this discouraging reception the lieutenant outlined to the retired attorney the story of the last night's developments. As he finished Mr. Simms scratched the thinking expanse of his scholarly head and mused:

"Curious, curious. I wonder who gave him my name and address and what he wanted of either? Let's see that mystifying object you spoke of. It may throw some light on this matter."

On receiving the figure which Reed held out to him the little old man pounced upon it with delight, turning it over and over.

"An alabaster Ushabti figure," he beamed. "Nineteenth Dynasty, I should guess—probably Seti I. He certainly had an army of them prepared to take the burdens of the other world off his kingly shoulders. Caused seven hundred to be buried with him."

"I don't exactly get you, Mr. Simms," retorted the puzzled police official.

"My apologies, Mr. Reed," bowed Mr. Simms mockingly. "I was just communing with myself. I shouldn't attempt to bore you with any dissertations on the transcendental. In words of one syllable this is a figure the ancient Egyptians of noble blood had buried with their mummies. They thought somebody had to do a lot of work in the future life and these Ushabtis, or Respondents, were supposed to come to celestial life and do it for their august masters."

"I see. I see," murmured the lieutenant importantly.

"Glad you do," grinned Mr. Simms. "I might further enlighten you by saying that the old Egyptians started to employ these figures only after the Middle Empire, or say about 2600 B. C. It is extremely probable that before that time they killed slaves to be buried with them, but that with a growing sense of morality they discarded the old barbarous method of escaping toil by the substitution of this much more poetic method."

"I get you," responded the interested Mr. Reed. "Sort of Christian Science dope."

"Just so, or words to that effect," grinned Mr. Simms. "You may be interested to know that these marks down the front explain the use of the word Ushabti, which means 'Answerers.' They state that the Ushabti is ready for the call of his master and read, 'Verily I am here, wheresoever thou mayest call me.' The one in my hand is an exceptionally good specimen. Most of them are of much inferior material, a lot of them being simply of wood or glazed porcelain."

"I see. I see," agreed Reed. "But what might its value be?"

"Hard to tell," replied Mr. Simms judiciously. "All according to how badly one might want it. I suppose this would bring ten or fifteen pounds anywhere."

"Pounds of what?" asked Mr. Reed uncomprehendingly.

"English pounds. Say about fifty or seventy-five dollars in our money."

"Hum," mused the lieutenant, "then I reckon the thief overlooked a bet. There was another of 'em too."

"Was, eh?" exclaimed Simms. "Guess I'd better go down and take a look at this unknown friend of ours. Wait till I go change my shoes."

Running nimbly up-stairs the little old man quickly changed his slippers for a pair of old-fashioned elastic-sided gaiters, donned a short overcoat, beneath which his long alpaca coat tails protruded flappingly in the wind, and accompanied the police

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officer to the morgue. He here examined the body of the man with an appraising eye, and then gave attention to the exhibits found on his body and in his large telescope.

"Hum," he muttered after giving these objects a careful scrutiny. "A Syrian, without doubt well-to-do, and not long in this country. Your rosary is nothing but a set of Mohammedan prayer beads. Most well-to-do Syrians carry them as you would carry a pocket piece. You will note this one has but thirty-three beads, representing one-third of the sacred names of Allah.

"Allah had one hundred names, by the way, but told only ninety-nine of them to his followers, whispering the one-hundredth one to the camel, who is too wise to divulge the secret. A regular Mohammedan would be likely to carry a ninety-nine bead string, and it doesn't mean that an Oriental carrying such a string is a Mohammedan at all. This man wasn't, anyhow, as you will note from the cross tattooed on his arm."

"What do you make of this fancy work?" inquired the officer.

"Fine, fine," exclaimed the little old man. "It's genuine Bokhara work, and a most delicate pattern. Worth at least four or five hundred dollars. The other Ushabti figure isn't so valuable. It's glazed porcelain and worth probably a couple of pounds. I think it quite likely that this man, coming probably to New York on his way from abroad, was sent to me by some one in the East knowing my interest in such things as he doubtless had to dispose of."

"What do you suppose is the answer?" queried the anxious lieutenant.

"Can't say. Can't say," bustled the little old man, preparing to take his departure. "I'll think it over, and see what I can make of it. Let you know as soon as anything turns up."

Without further ceremony the nimble Mr. Simms pattered out, while the officer returned to headquarters with puzzled shakings of the head.

"Queer duck that, but I'll bet he turns up something on this before long."

ARRIVED at his office the lieutenant found the indefatigable Levy awaiting him.

"Just ran into a snag, sir," reported that officer. "I ran out to the Yellow Bonnet garage this morning and just got back. Waited around all morning until I could interview every man who had a taxi out last night. Not a one will admit he was near the M. C. Station between seven and nine o'clock, and the boss says he has an account of every car being somewheres else between those hours. Looks rather fishy to me, but all those shuffers are fly guys, and you might as well try to get dope out of a clam."

"Go on back to the M. C. and find out what that feller can give you on this," suggested Reed. "From his description of everything else he ought to be the kind of guy to set you right on the driver of that car. Chances are he knows his name and all about him. Old Josiah Simms has horned in on this deal, besides, and unless he falls down harder than I ever knew him to, we're liable to hear something worth while from him at any minute."

This prediction of the lieutenant might or might not have flattered Mr. Simms had it come to his acute ears, but as developments eventuated they made possible a realization of Mr. Reed's prediction much quicker than either he or Mr. Simms had any reason to expect.

On arriving home Mr. Simms was called to the telephone as he stepped into the house, his maid Ellen having held a man on the wire as she saw her master padding up the sidewalk from the street car. The call was from Benzoni, the "Banker of Little Italy." Mr. Benzoni was a staunch admirer of old Mr. Simms, and as a *sub-rosa* pawnbroker had come into professional contact with Mr. Simms repeatedly, to the esteem and respect of both.

On a number of occasions the investigations of the little old man had led directly to the quaint and somewhat bizarre establishment of old Benzoni, and almost always had concerned themselves with certain property of doubtful ownership confided to the old pawnbroker by some of his decidedly questionable clients. In almost every case, moreover, this property had been of more or less antiquarian value. It was particularly within the knowledge of Benzoni that Mr. Simms's peculiar interests lay along the line of Egyptian antiquities.

It was therefore with no surprise that Mr. Simms listened over the wire to a request of Benzoni to call at his place of business as soon as possible.

"I have something here I know will excite your immediate interest, Mr. Simms,"

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spoke Benzoni. "It is because I want your advice that I call on you, my friend," he explained further. "It is purely selfish, but I have an idea you will feel amply repaid nevertheless."

Scenting an adventure bound to be interesting, inasmuch as old Benzoni had taken the trouble to consult him, the little old man consumed a hasty lunch of milk toast and a dish of stewed prunes, and hastened back down-town, reaching Benzoni's half-bank half-pawnshop by two o'clock in the afternoon. On entering the place the old banker exhibited to the astonished gaze of Mr. Simms an object that called forth a most extravagant panegyric from the little old man.

"God bless my soul, Benzoni," Mr. Simms addressed the banker "and who would have thought ever to see such a thing in the heart of Little Italy! This is a solid gold Ushabti figure of the Nineteenth Dynasty, I should say. As solid gold alone it's worth about six hundred and seventy-five dollars, for it doesn't weigh a grain less than fifty ounces. Its archeological value is considerably more, and at the least computation it is well worth from two thousand to two thousand five hundred dollars. Gold Ushabti figures are exceedingly rare, and this is a most perfect one and of superb workmanship. Wherever did you get it?"

"That's the point, Mr. Simms. I could guess something of its intrinsic value, but I had an idea you might be able to tell me with some definiteness as to its actual worth. It was brought in this morning by a young woman of far from spotless reputation. She claimed that a rich Western gentleman had presented it to her the evening before, which to my mind isn't a very likely story.

"I have an idea she came by it through no particularly blameless channels, so stalled her off, by expressing some doubt as to the object being solid gold. I told her I should make an investigation to determine whether it was solid gold or simply plated. I let her infer I suspected it might be analogous to a gold brick, you understand."

"Fine, fine," chuckled the little old man. "You're a fox all right, Benzoni. But what do you know of this young woman?"

"Nothing at all of good, I am afraid, Mr. Simms," replied the old banker, shaking his head sadly. "In the vernacular of her kidney she is what you call the 'broad' of a very unsavory character—Buck Powers, in fact, the wrecking crew gangster. I should certainly hesitate to take any steps likely to involve myself with that precious desperado."

"What's that? What's that?" sputtered Simms. "Buck Powers, did you say? Excuse me, Benzoni, I want to telephone right away. You *have* started something."

Securing police headquarters on the wire Mr. Simms requested the immediate presence of Lieutenant Reed, who obeyed this summons with an alacrity that was a fitting tribute to the little old man's peculiar influence.

To the excited officer on his arrival Mr. Simms related the rather sudden developments, indicating to the slow-moving mind of that official, that there could be little doubt that Buck Powers had himself slit the bag of the dead man, stolen everything that appealed to him as having any value, as well as probably having "frisked" the dead body of all cash valuables. This hypothesis slowly grasped the deliberate imagination of the officer, who immediately suggested the drag-net for the apprehension of both Buck and his lady friend.

To this Mr. Simms demurred, considering that since the young woman was to return on the morrow to secure Benzoni's opinion it would be better to apprehend her then, as "caught with the goods on" she would be more likely to divulge evidence incriminating her friend, Buck, especially as the element of surprise was bound to be greater than if picked up by some patrolman and given plenty of time to perfect a likely story before being confronted by the lieutenant. To this the latter readily agreed, and the three parted with an engagement to foregather in Benzoni's shop the following morning at eleven, which was a half-hour before the time Benzoni expected the girl to show up for his verdict.

AT ELEVEN-THIRTY the three were ready and waiting for the appearance of "Flash" Sanders, as the young woman was known. Benzoni was waiting behind his banker's wicket, and the lieutenant and Mr. Simms were concealed behind a partition that divided the room into business and living quarters for Benzoni's greater comfort.

Promptly at eleven-thirty the young girl appeared. Dressed in garish style, she

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flirted in brazenly and asked the old man to come across. The latter gravely announced that he had decided doubts as to the genuineness of the object and handed it back with a statement that he could allow her nothing on it. As the young woman received the stolen article Lieutenant Reed stepped from behind the partition and placing his hand roughly on the girl's shoulder advised her that she was under arrest.

The girl screamed and kicked hysterically and before she was reduced to a semblance of calmness it required the combined efforts of the three men to quell her furious efforts to escape. Striking while the iron was hot the officer advised her that she stood accused of a most serious crime and suggested that she clear her skirts as thoroughly as possible by stating where she obtained the object she held in her hands and make a clean breast of it. In her excitement and apprehension this she did, claiming that she had found the object hidden in her bedroom the morning before, where it had doubtless been placed without her knowledge by Buck Powers.

As Buck made common quarters with the young woman, this confession had every ring of truth and after calling in a plain-clothes man who had been stationed across the street the young woman was dispatched to headquarters for safe keeping, the lieutenant betaking himself in the direction of Kid Ball's café, where he had every reason to suspect Buck Powers would most likely be found at this hour of the day.

This assumption of the lieutenant's proved entirely correct. Buck was in the café just completing a rather early noonday lunch, and at the invitation of the officer accompanied that silent individual to headquarters without demur. On arriving Mr. Simms was called into the office of the lieutenant and requested by the latter to exhibit to the astonished gangster the gold Ushabti figure.

"Your 'broad' has squealed, Buck," announced Reed, "and the game is up. You might just as well make a clean breast of it."

"The devil!" yelled Buck. "I'll bump her off for this! I guess there ain't no use in my trying to bunk you, Lieut, though at that I'll just lay a hundred to one you didn't dig this up all by your lonesome. It certainly ain't on the cards."

"Never mind that," retorted the officer. "We ain't all such dubs around here as your game may make you think. We know a lot more, but if you got anything to say for yourself, I'll listen."

"Sure I have, Lieut," asserted Buck earnestly. "I got to say something. You got me dead to rights with that gold brick all right, but you're in wrong at that. I didn't top the guy, and that's all there is to it. Now here's the straight dope. I swear to God it is."

With every appearance of concern and earnestness the trapped gangster proceeded to detail to his interested listeners an amended story of his experience on the night he brought the dead man to headquarters. Realizing fully the predicament in which he found himself it was with absolutely no hesitation that he admitted to the definite crime of robbery, since its acceptance as the truth meant the escape from a charge infinitely more serious and dangerous for him.

He averred that on the night in question he had picked up his two foreign fares exactly as he had originally stated. Speeding up his powerful machine he had turned into Fifteenth Street at about twenty miles an hour, increasing this speed to thirty before he had gone a block toward Michigan Avenue. When about a block and a half away from Michigan he had secured a call through the speaking tube from the woman passenger. With a decidedly broken accent she had asked him excitedly to go as fast as he could to the corner of Michigan and Fifteenth, stop suddenly to allow her time to alight and then turn at once and go as fast as he could back toward Lafayette on Fifteenth and thence to the Oriental Hotel.

These directions he followed minutely. He stopped so suddenly at Michigan as to cause him to turn almost half around, owing to the wet pavement. The woman alighted in great haste, appeared to speak a hasty farewell to the man within, and with her small grip ran to the corner and secreted herself in a sheltering doorway. The shades had all been drawn on the entrance of the couple, and Buck stated he did not see or hear the man passenger from the time he got into the car.

Following directions, however, he completed his turn in Fifteenth Street and raced back on that thoroughfare toward Lafayette. A block away from Michigan he almost collided with another car going

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in the opposite direction at almost forty miles an hour. He had been given little time or opportunity for anything but the avoidance of a nasty collision, but did have time to note that the appoaching machine was a newly painted one with a bright yellow body, which he felt sure was a privately owned "jitney" run by an acquaintance named Blat Finney.

Finney was an unsavory gangster whose source of income was of a character equally reprehensible with Buck's, but notwithstanding this the contumely indulged in by the irate Powers was none the less frank and untrammeled. Powers stated that he had glanced back to see the possible damage suffered by this offending driver and was surprised to see him slew around suddenly with a dangerous skid and take after Buck's machine with all speed. He also noted a gesticulating passenger leaning out of each window of the pursuing machine, evidently urging the driver to his utmost efforts to overtake him.

With a disregard for the powers of the pursuing machine Buck had not attempted even to extend himself, feeling assured that in the event of there being any real reason why his passenger should feel unwilling to be overtaken he had only to say the word, when a clean pair of heels might be exhibited to the pursuers by a single spurt of gas.

However, the following car dogged the preceding one with disconcerting annoyance, and tiring of this espionage Buck had given his car all it had on arriving at Lafayette and succeeded in distancing the yellow car long before arriving at the congested down-town district at Wayne and Lafayette. At Griswold Street, however, he was forced to stop on account of an unusual press of traffic, and remained stationary for almost two minutes.

During this interval of waiting he saw the yellow car approach from the west. It was unable to get within forty feet of his machine, as he was closely pressed behind by a row of at least three waiting cars. He saw the yellow machine stop and a man alight, and as the latter did so the blockade was lifted, when Buck slowly got under way and sped down Griswold to Jefferson, turning east on that street and continuing his way to the car barns with no further pursuit that he was able to discover.

Arriving in front of the Oriental Hotel he had alighted and opened the door. His passenger had not responded to his invitation to alight, and stepping within the tonneau he discovered his fare dead in the back seat, with blood all over the front of his clothes. Confronted with this unusual situation Buck had done some fast thinking.

It had occurred to him that because of certain suspicions held against him by the authorities it might be the better part of policy to continue with his dead passenger to the creek a few blocks beyond, in whose sluggish stream it would be an easy matter to give the victim a fairly mysterious burial. However, he decided against this course, as the night was early and too much traffic passed over the bridge to make such a plan as safe as he should like.

He determined, therefore, to take the body to headquarters, relying on the disappearance of the woman as a thoroughly convincing cause of the murder, had it been one. He averred to his tense listeners that he had no doubt in his mind as to the woman's guilt. Having alighted in such haste, her furtive concealment, and the fact that she, instead of the man, had given the directions, all tended to strengthen this hypothesis on his part.

While driving back he had a blow-out, and as he labored with the tube in the garage it occurred to him that a toll of the possible effects of the dead man was a prerogative entirely justified, especially as he saw no means of securing any payment for his lost time otherwise. Acting on this thought he had driven the car to a dark spot on Congress just off Joseph Campau, entered the machine and taken the only articles that seemed to have a ready exchange value.

He found eighty-five dollars in cash in the man's pocket. He had slit the telescope, finding that procedure the only means of ready access. In the bag he had found nothing worth taking, with the exception of a piece of gold whose value he could only estimate. Having pocketed these valuables he had driven his car to the lodgings of his lady friend, and running up-stairs, quickly secreted the gold in a bottom bureau drawer, keeping the cash on his person. He had then delivered his dead passenger to police headquarters, the succeeding developments being too well known to the lieutenant to warrant further exposition.

The probable truth of this statement was carefully weighed by Lieutenant Reed in his usual deliberate manner. Of the keen

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little old man who had been a silent listener to the confession he asked advice on several points. To Mr. Simms the story related by the trapped chauffeur sounded convincing and he so expressed himself.

JUST AS the lieutenant was about to render his own final opinion he was interrupted by a message that Detective Levy was without with a report bearing on the case at issue. The latter was immediately summoned and reported, after Buck had been taken from the room.

"I just got next to that nigger doorman at the station," he explained. "He says that Yellow Bonnet did have a peculiar look to him and that he is far from certain that it was a regular taxicab. He remembered that the color was a little too light for the Yellow Bonnet line and moreover, was sure the car was driven by a man he had never seen before in charge of one of their cars. Another darky standing near put in his oar and said he knew the man. His name is Blat Finney, and he's supposed to be a bad one."

"Well," responded Reed. "We certainly seem to get the dope checked up right along. I just beat you to it on this Finney person, Levy, but you did good work at that. Go on out and see if you can dig the rat up."

To Mr. Simms the lieutenant suggested a return the next morning by which time the officer felt sure the missing Finney would be apprehended. The little old man expressed a continued interest in the case and promised to be on hand for any further disclosure likely to be secured from the driver of the second car.

As it was nearing Mr. Simms' dinner time he took his leave of the lieutenant with a promise to return at ten the next day. On the first mail of the following morning, however, Mr. Simms received a letter that prompted him to advance the time of his visit to Reed, as he felt sure its contents would have an interest for the police officer equaling his own. The communication was short and read as follows:

Jamel
ANTIQUITIES

New York City.
February 12th.

DEAR MR. SIMMS:

About a week since a fellow countryman called to dispose of some excellent Egyptian specimens. He had but arrived in this country and was on his way to your city.

I purchased several excellent scarabs and an Isis Suckling Horus you would greatly admire. I could have disposed of them all, but for the haste of my friend to depart for Detroit.

I took the liberty to give him your name and address. As is usual he was to remit a commission on anything he sold you. He has not done so, and I feel sure at least one of his objects is a specimen you couldn't resist. Please tell me if he has called, and give me his address if you can. His name is B. Haddad.

Hoping you are well and happy as always I remain,

Yours truly,
ED. JAMEL.

As it proved, the energy of Mr. Simms in hastening down-town availed him nothing, for the lieutenant did not appear in his office until almost an hour past the time of appointment. On his arrival, however, he was much interested in the note, which afforded at least a most probable solution as to the name of the man, as well as confirming his nationality, as Jamel, the correspondent of Mr. Simms, was a Syrian dealer in antiquities long and favorably know to the keen antiquarian.

"Everything dopes out all right, so far, Mr. Simms," remarked the lieutenant. "But we can't seem to find any trace of Finney. I just came from his garage. His car is there, and has been since late on the night of this murder. Levy is out on it, but he can't dig him up anywhere he ought to be. He's a dope, and probably is hung up in some flop we don't know about. However, you trot along home, and I'll call you up just as soon as we land him."

Having little regard for the efficiency of either Reed or Levy when it came to unearthing a dope-fiend, provided the latter had any real reason for remaining in uninterrupted concealment, the little old man decided it would be a pleasant manner of spending a few interesting hours should he undertake this slight task himself.

Accordingly he made a call on his old friend "One Lamp" Sam, the keenest "lookout" engaged in protecting the interests of one of the best-known gambling-joints in Cadillac Square. In the saloon beneath the gilded den of vice so ably picketed by the one-eyed negro, he found the latter just arisen from his well-earned period of rest, quenching an enormous thirst from a most copious scupper at the bar.

"Hello, Sam," greeted the nimble little

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old man, ordering a glass of vichy for himself and inviting the negro to a secluded nook in the corner of the big room. "I want a little straight dope from you. I want to locate a hop-fiend named Blat-Finney. I have an idea he's flirting right now with the old gunga ray, and if anybody is likely to know where he is, it's you."

"You know me, Mr. Simms," returned the negro delighted at the affability of his old friend. "I sure gives you a hand whenever you wants it. I knows this here Finney all right, and if it's any help, you gets his number from me in just no time a-tall. I oughta have the info for you before official closin' time. I'll be too busy after dat to be on the job for you."

"All right," assented Mr. Simms. "I'm going home, and will be there all day. Just ring me up as soon as you get the dope."

Returning home with a confidence that he would have the desired information within a very short time, Mr. Simms spent the rest of the day in pleasant study, and just before retiring was called up by One Lamp Sam.

"I'se mighty sorry, Mr. Simms," his willing henchman apologized over the wire. "But dat bird has sure secreted himself some. I gets wise he was blowing a good bit of coin three or four nights ago, and had a couple of skirts with 'im. One was Eva Fay . and de oder was Flash Sanders. Flash is in stir over some rookus but Finney and Eva has just naturally dropped out of sight. What I says goes. You'll git de info by some time tomorrow."

"Much obliged, Sam. Do your best," thanked Mr. Simms.

On the next morning at half-past ten Mr. Simms was again called to the phone by his friend Sam.

"I gits it O. K., Mr. Simms," he was exultantly informed. "Eva and Finney is to be found over Bud Hank's place on Mullet Street. Dey was dere not later dan an hour ago, and if you beats it right away you gits 'im. He ain't no early riser."

THANKING his informant heartily the little old man called up police headquarters and gave the necessary directions to Lieutenant Reed, who acted on the information at once. By the time Mr. Simms reached the lieutenant's office the missing Finney and his "broad" were being interviewed by the officer and his assistant Levy.

"Morning, Mr. Simms," the latter was greeted by Reed. "Your dope was right, but this poor fish doesn't seem to know whether he's afoot or on horseback, though everything he says dovetails with Buck's story."

It developed that the dope-ridden gangster had been approached three days before the night of the murder and been offered fifty dollars to put at the disposal of two men the exclusive use of his machine. One of them was a Turk known to Finney, and the other an ugly fat foreigner, with a large wart covered with long silky hairs. For three nights and three days the three hung around the Michigan Central station, making every train from the East.

On the third night events had happened exactly as described by Buck. The two men had followed a man and a woman from the station and as soon as the couple had entered a taxi Finney was directed to follow it. He knew nothing at all of the purpose or objects of his employers, and cared less, as in the event of the success of certain undescribed eventualities he was to receive an additional fifty dollars, and with business as it was, even the original sum promised sufficed to keep the gangster in ample funds to meet his most pressing needs.

On the night in question he had simply followed directions. He had chased the fleeing car in which his patrons were so interested and at the corner of Griswold and Lafayette had succeeded in getting within a few feet of Buck's machine. The larger and older of the two men had then alighted and run toward the taxi which the couple had entered. He had seen the man run in that direction, but was given instructions by the other to take him to the corner of Antoine and Clinton, which he did.

The second man there alighted, presented Finney with the extra fifty promised and dismissed him. Finney had at once speculated on the most efficient manner of immediate enjoyment of such a sum, and running across two lady friends of his had bought both a considerable number of drinks and later repaired to the hop-joint with one of them, where he had been rooted out by the police.

Asked regarding the sudden turning of Buck at the corner of Michigan and Fifteenth he replied that his maneuver had

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disconcerted him somewhat, but that he had not been interested in the conduct of the occupants of the first car, and had not seen either of them alight. In fact he was hardly close enough to have seen had such a course been actually pursued, and with this as the sum total of his information the lieutenant directed that Blat and his girl be locked up and held on suspicion until something sufficiently definite transpired warranting their release or a booking on a tangible charge.

"We certainly got a clean case against Buck, all right," commented the lieutenant, "but for the time being we'll just hold him on suspicion with the other three. It looks funny to me that Finney and Buck's girls should have been together on the night this gink was bumped off, especially since this Flash shows up with the stuff the next morning. I'd bet a month's pay that Buck knew all about Finney besides. We'll just lay low and wait. Something is bound to turn up."

"I shouldn't count too much on that if I were you, Reed," advised Mr. Simms. "There is still a good live lead for you to run down."

"What's that?" inquired Reed suspiciously.

"Why, the Turk Finney deposited at the corner of Antoine and Clinton streets," suggested Mr. Simms quietly.

"Oh, him," retorted Reed. "It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack, wouldn't it? Of course I'll get a man out on it, but there ain't much chance."

"You may be right," shrugged Mr. Simms, "but there are only a few hundred Turks in the whole city of Detroit, and if you will send this man Levy after him, I'd lay a little bet he'd come back with something definite."

"All right," replied the lieutenant. "I'll send 'im."

The detective Levy justified the opinion of Mr. Simms in his ability, though he far from created any enthusiasm in the breast of the lieutenant by his report the next morning. He reported that he had learned with a fair degree of certainty that the man wanted was an employee of the Ford Motor Co. The description of the missing man was hardly sufficient to lead him unerringly to the man he sought, but the peculiarities of his companion afforded the necessary link.

The missing man was named Ishmael and less than a week ago had entertained a much older man whom he had introduced at his boarding-house as his uncle. Neither of the two had been seen for six days, however, and it was a reasonable assumption that both had probably left the city. The uncle was supposed to have come for a visit from Canada, but it did not seem promising to seek a nameless Turk in that extensive dependency.

With the sixth day since the murder nearing a close the real solution of the identity of the actual criminal seemed farther away than on the night of the crime. With three probable suspects missing, there seemed no possible channel for the much-desired information as to the identity or whereabouts of either. With four suspects safely secluded there appeared no real evidence that even two of them could have had any real cognizance of the crime, and much less any convincing evidence that more than one could possibly be held as even an accessory.

While worrying over these phases of the affair the lieutenant was interrupted in his reveries about three o'clock by the bustling entrance of detective Levy.

"I got a bite, lieutenant, I got a bite," he exclaimed excitedly. "That Greek hotel keeper has just phoned there has been a woman bothering the life out of him all morning. She is small and dark, has a lot of black hair and beautiful black eyes. The Greek has told her to come back at four o'clock, when he promised to have some dope for her. I'll hustle right out there and bring the dame in."

"Good, good," commended Reed. "I thought something was bound to turn up. I'll phone old man Simms and have him down here by the time you get back. Beat it."

MR. SIMMS responded to the invitation of the police officer promptly and was in the latter's office well before five. At a quarter-to-five the self-important Levy entered, half-leading, half-dragging a young woman of considerable Oriental charm. She was weeping quietly, and her large lustrous eyes bespoke a grief that touched the heart of the nimble Mr. Simms, who hastened forward with a chair for her, patting her hand reassuringly, as he spoke a few words in Arabic to her.

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"*Inshalla,*" she murmured to him with a look of gratitude.

"I guess we're through, Chief," reported Levy with little concern for the condition of his charge. "I tells her what's happened on the way down, and she spills the beans. The men following her and her companion were her husband and his nephew. She saw them get into Finney's cab and her and this guy Haddad fixes it up for her to jump out at Michigan and beat it out to Dearborn to an aunt of hers till he could shake the other guys off the scent."

"But who tops off this Haddad?" bruskly interrupted the lieutenant.

"I'm coming to that," added Levy, displeased at the interruption. "As soon as she learns he's been topped off in that cab she says who done it, as she gets a letter this morning in care of her aunt what makes her disregard Haddad's instructions and hike right in to Detroit to find out what it means. She is to stay at Dearborn a week before looking up Haddad, but the strain's too great, and she can't wait."

"Say," again interrupted Reed. "Can't you get to the point?"

"In a minute. In a minute," Levy returned. "This dame says she was forced into a marriage at fifteen with a Turk. Her father lived in Beyrout and this Turk has a political job and some pull, as well as lending her dad some money. She's in love with this here Haddad, but it's no use. The Turk gets her and they duck out for Cairo. Haddad follows soon after, but the Turk sees him and they hike for New York, later coming here and afterwards moving to Toronto. A few weeks ago this Haddad lands in New York and gets word where she is and they gets busy. They both thought ten years was long enough to wait."

"Well, good Lord, and so do I," retorted Reed. "Get down to cases. This lady ain't no widow yet, and you're just wasting our time."

"That's pretty near all," continued Levy. "This lady here 'borrows' a century from the old man while he's not looking, meets Haddad in New York and they start for Detroit together a week ago. The old man evidently gets a pretty good hunch what's up, for he keeps tabs on her through their 'underground secret service' and is Johnny on the Spot when she and Haddad land at the station. That's about all, except that her husband tops off Haddad in the cab, probably right after meeting up with it at Griswold and Lafayette."

"Yes," complained the lieutenant, "but how do we know he did? We could guess that much about almost any of the half-dozen we have already lined up."

"Got his own word for it," cried Levy with conscious pride. "Here," he turned to the weeping woman, "Gimme that letter."

The lieutenant was handed a soiled envelope postmarked at St. Louis three days before, which the detective had taken from the hand of the Syrian woman. Reed extracted the letter, and with a puzzled frown handed the communication to Simms.

"How in the devil do you expect me to make heads or tails of that?" he protested. "I don't know any of these here foreign languages. English is enough for me."

"This letter is in Arabic," explained Mr. Simms, after carefully perusing its contents. "It says that by the time the letter reaches the lady the writer will be safely in Juarez, where his political activities assure him perfect immunity. He states further that he has seen fit to assist in the fate provided by Allah for her sweetheart, and that if she has not already learned of the fatal taking-off of Haddad this will apprise her of it, as well as indicating his share in that proceeding as a piece of merited vengeance he hopes to extend to her sooner or later."

"Well," commented Lieutenant Reed, wiping his brow. "That seems to be fairly conclusive, don't it now? What'll we do with this Haddad's junk?"

"Why give it to the lady, of course," spoke up Levy. "I told her of the idols and things and how Mr. Simms dug up the dope on them. She probably will know where to use the money."

"You keep the beautiful Ushabti, sir," said the woman sadly to Mr. Simms. "You are kind man, and know my people. To know them is to love them, and I would have you remember me kindly too. My love is dead. I am desolate. For me it is finish."

"*Bukra*, dear lady," smiled Mr. Simms in his most infectious manner, "tomorrow is a big happy world. I could almost be your great-great-grandfather, and look at me, my dear. You are made for happiness, not for sorrow. You come with me. I have a glass of *arrack* at my house. Tears of happiness, I call it, and we shall drink it together and talk of your wonderful country."

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CHRISTMAS EVE AT SULPHUR FLATS

by Robert Russell Strang

Author of "Off the Trail," and "The Sourdough Twins' Last Clean-up"

A WEEK ago the Wee Fellah gets off his feed and instead of crawling funnily over the cabin floor—three jerks and a kind of a hop, you know—he just sets and whimpers. Next day the whites of his eyes have turned dark, his face hot and cold in spots, and his eyelids seem to weigh about a ton.

Liza scents something mighty far wrong, so we have a heart-to-heart talk as to what had better be done. I'm ready at a moment's notice to hitch up the dogs and hike to Fairbanks for a doctor; but my wife reminds me that would take a week at least—and the crisis would be reached before my return. She advises me to have patience. Patience! Lordy, lordy.

Since that night until this—the morning of Christmas Eve—I've worked like a nigger in my tunnel, every hour or two slipping over to the cabin for a look and a word. And I could feel more than ordinarily at peace with the world this morning, for yesterday I broke through the hanging wall into the ledge—to crosscut which has taken me three years—and say, the ore is so decayed that I can mine it without blasting and pan it the same as placer gravel!

The gold too, is so soft and fine that the first nest of nuggets I run into I punched holes in them with a nail and strung them on a piece of snaring wire as a Christmas present for the Wee Fellah. And here he's fighting for his breath and don't know a thing about it. Oh, gold isn't everything!

I decided not to go to work today, and I'm sitting in the kitchen with my chin in my hands, my heart in my mukluks and my ear stuck out about a foot to catch a sound from the sleeping-room, when Liza tiptoes in—Lord, how worn she looks—and seeing how things are with me, she suggests that for a few hours I concentrate my mind on something else.

"For," says she, "before candle-light—better go over to your tunnel for a few hours, Sam. I'll put a candle in the window, and so long as you see it burning, you'll know—you'll know——"

Which is the reason why I'm seated on an upended dynamite box at the end of my tunnel under the mountain, on one side of me a coal-oil can filled with glowing wood coals—which ordinarily I use as a forge for sharpening my drills—and on the other side, two lighted candles. In front of me doing duty as a writing-desk is an overturned home-made wheelbarrow, and I'm doing my level best to concentrate.

Before putting my pencil to paper I look

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down the long tunnel, across the gray patch of light to the candle in the window of the cabin on the other side of the gulch; and although my philosophy has taught me to get out and hustle after things instead of sitting down and praying for them, I can't forbear to whisper just a few words.

Naturally, the first thought that enters my mind is what took place on Sulphur Flats on this day a year ago. So here goes.

"LIZA," I observed to my wife that morning, "what's the matter with hitching up the dogs and driving over to Sulphur Flats and having Christmas dinner with Aaron Bunn? And tonight they'll be a Christmas tree and a dance, and for a change we'll hear other voices than our own."

Liza looks up from her knitting. On her knees rests a birch-bark basketful of the cutest woolen jiggers, why some of them are no bigger than one of my woolen mitts! Her face lights up.

"The very thing, Sam," she replies. "You owe Aaron a visit and I want to have a talk with Juby Martin about——"

Our eyes cross swords in a glint of understanding. Oh, we've got a code.

I hitch up the huskies and an hour later we're crawling up the Brimstone divide, me ahead on my snow-shoes breaking trail.

We pause for a few minutes in the saddle of the divide to admire the pink toques on Mt. McKinley and a dozen lesser peaks in the southwest. Being it's the only touch of sun we've seen for weeks, somehow it seems only about zero after that.

We pulled into Sulphur Flats about four in the afternoon. I let Liza off at Juby Martin's, then kept on down the creek a half mile to Aaron's place.

I cross the little foot bridge that spans the creek with a whoop and a jangle of bells, my idea being to surprise him. I enter hurriedly; but as I reach the middle of the floor my blood is frozen by a "*Yow-w-wl*" from his sleeping-room.

Thinking he's being blackjacked I rushes in. It's me that gets the surprise; for there in front of the looking-glass stands Aaron, the veins on his face, neck and hands standing out in bas-relief, and madly trying to clamp a porcelain collar on to a b'iled shirt with a corrugated front.

I look him up and down contemptuously. Aside from the shirt he has on a new pair of knee-high moccasins and the indispensable third of a blue suit. Being this is so unusual for him I sneer low and nastily.

Aaron glares at me till he's purple.

Next moment he seizes that neck-yoke with both hands and with a "Rip-p-p!" tears it off his neck and shoves it in the stove, where I see the remains of several others. Then with homicide in his eye and the smile of a fallen angel he reaches for the ax. I stroll into the other room.

"Sam Slim," he snarls, following me closely, "jes' go careful. Today I ain't in the mood to take any guff from any —— son of a frosted puddin' from Brimstone, Blazes or anywhere else." And he runs a forefinger along the edge of the blade.

"Hold on, old-timer, hold on!" I come back at him. "It's only a year ago since you nearly broke your jaws laughing at me because my wife-elect insists that I wear one of them before she'll marry me. And didn't you say then that there wasn't a human being on earth could make you get inside of one?"

For a moment his eyes glitter like spear-points, then blushing like a beet he throws the ax in the corner and we shake hands.

"Explanations are in order," I reminded.

For a moment he seemed kerflummoxed. Then he looks at the clock, then at the collar-box.

"If you promise to help me on with one of them things, for I've made up my mind to get my neck inside one of the dozen, I'll tell you what has taken place up to now. Tonight you'll see the rest of it."

I assured him that I'd put a collar on him if I'd to take the bolt and nut off a clamp and tighten it up with a monkey-wrench. Which I can see takes a great load off his mind.

He reaches down a box of cigars and we light up.

"SAM," he began, "did you ever notice anything mush-brained about the Sulphurites? Anything to lead you to believe that the camp was a prep school for the Federal foolish house?"

He blows a big cloud of smoke and eyes me narrowly.

"Why, no, Aaron," I replied, puzzled to know what he's driving at. "On the occasions I've been over they all seemed to me to be about normal. A hospitable, contented——"

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"You've said it, Sam," he breaks in. "Contented was the word. We lived, as you might say, in a state of blasted innocence and fat-eyed comfort. One Sulphurite was as good as another. If anything was going on in the Bachelors' Hall, all he had to do was to mush up and butt in. And so long as he behaved himself, it was his own fault if he didn't have a good time."

He paused to take a new hold on the yarn rope.

"I'm inclined to think that the excitement of having two things happen on the same day went to their heads. I hope so. The first was the advent of Dickson Burchell and wife into our midst. They are supposed to have arrived in Fairbanks on the last up-river boat of the season.

"Then they sled it over here and, after renting the Wheeler cabin, he gives out that he's a representative of the gold-dredging trust, and has come from the Outside to size up the possibilities of Sulphur Flats in the interests of his company.

"The second happening was the collapse of Slocum Mary, which wasn't so unnatural when you consider her manner of life. Doc Barret, who arrives from Fairbanks that day, after an examination of Mary, gives out that her days are numbered and advises her to go to a hospital in Fairbanks, where she can die in comfort.

"Slocum Mary is not hit with the idea of dying among strangers. And as she has never competed for a harp or halo, her one chance of getting any one to care for her in Sulphur Flats seems to center about Juby Martin.

"Juby, God knows, has plenty to do, what with her two kids, the bathhouse and the laundry. But Mary begs her to take her in. And Juby, havin' a heart as big as the sorrows of the world, installs her in a cubby-hole off the living-room.

"That takes place the day after the arrival of the Burchells, the excitement of which has evidently gone to the heads of the other women in camp. Anyhow, a few days afterward, Juby is what you might call blacklisted.

"From the moment that Burchell gives out his business he becomes the center of gravity to the majority of the claim owners, and his wife ditto among their womenfolk. Never in all my life have I heard of such jockeyin' for position; the men for a pull with the man, their wives to gyrate on the same plane as his wife, and for a similar purpose. Incidentally, the fact that her clothes are about ten years nearer the fashion than those worn by the Sulphur ladies, places her on a pedestal by herself; though I hear they're working overtime to catch up on her.

"Of course, all dolled up to kill, Mrs. Burchell attends the first semi-monthly dance, and graciously allows herself to be introduced to all the women. She presently discovers that there's six lady cooks in the herd and, sayin' they smell of stew and beefsteak, she goes home in high dudgeon and says she'll never attend another if they are to be present. Can you beat it? On Sulphur Flats, mind you!

"Well sir, the following week, while Burchell is inspecting some of the claims and playing a lot of poker with their owners, his wife starts what is known as the Entrenoo Bridge Club, electing herself high, low, jack and the game. It's confined to the wives of claim owners who've suddenly been smitten with the society fever. This, Sam, leaves six mad lady cooks—and Juby Martin, who's worth half a dozen Entrenoo clubs; and the burg is divided into two hostile camps. Miss Preston, the schoolma'am, remains neutral.

"That Saturday night I'm up at Juby's for my bath and laundry, and I'm almost finished dressing when I hear some one enter the front room from the street and start tapping to attract Juby's attention. Juby, I know, is out in the back cabin putting the kids to bed, so I hurry up to go out and tell the party so.

"But while I'm thinkin' that, the party walks across the front room to the door of the living-room and taps on the lintel. It's at that moment I come out of the bathroom and see a hundred-and-seventy-five-pound blonde in a fur coat staring into the living-room as if at a ghost. She turns around as I come forward and draws the collar of her fur coat up around her face. I tell her where Juby is, and she replies that she'll call again, and goes away.

"While waiting for Juby I step into the living-room. Wrapped up in blankets in a big chair sits Slocum Mary, her head resting on the arm of the chair and her eyes closed. She's looking mighty poor.

"At that moment Juby returns, and no sooner does she see Mary's condition than

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she rushes to her side. 'Why, the poor girl is in a faint!' she cries.

"I wait until she recovers, then pick up my laundry and go home.

"Three or four days after that Burchell walks in on me and tells me what I already know. I'm touched by a sense of familiarity, and not a favorable one either, but for the life of me I can't place him. He hopes the day ain't far off when he'll see a monster dredge sailing into the golden gravels of Sulphur Flats. It sounds to me as if he'd learned his spiel off by heart and has got tired hearing it himself. His smile chills me. I start to draw him out about gold dredging, letting on I'm a dub.

"Sam, that gink just walks into the noose and hangs himself. He doesn't know any more about a dredge—I worked on the first one put up in California, you know—than a whale knows about a holiday. And I wonder to myself why such a rich company as his should choose such a poor representative. But that's done every day. I guess he's got a pull.

"Here I might remark that, though they weren't exactly told so, the lady cooks were given to understand that their presence wasn't desired at the dances. They had their own pride and took the hint—that is, all but Wilhelmina McGraw, and I'd give about two and a half cents to know how she brought Caribou Bill, the owner of Thirteen, to his knees. But she did, and now she's a member of the club and Bill goes around talking to himself.

"A week ago today I'm again up at Juby's, and I see in a flash she's been cryin'. Sam, until that moment I wasn't aware how weak my heart is—don't laugh. I had another feelin' about the same time. I wanted to choke somebody, or cut down a tree against all comers at a dollar a stroke, those who take the most to pay the one that takes the least, or almost anything.

"I demand to know what the matter is. She doesn't want to tell me. I gets mad and tell her she's got to tell! Then I see I've scared her, and the goose-flesh comes out all over my heart. And when she starts to cry and tell me all about it, why, that's the holiest moment in my life.

"For weeks it seems her kids have been lookin' forward to the Christmas tree that the Entrenoo Club is givin' tonight in Bachelors' Hall, and which has been the talk of sasiety for a month. But it seems that, a few days after she took in Slocum Mary, she received a note purporting to be signed by the committee of the hall that her presence was no longer desired at the dances. An' bein' too proud to ask their permission to attend, she doesn't know how to square herself with the kids.

"Sam, at that I got mad enough to eat the bridge club. In that moment you might say I'm roused from my social lethargy. And when I remembered that Judy's man helped to build the hall and I myself put more time in on it than any other on the Flats, I says to myself they've got to be taught a lesson. Of course, I'm told on all sides that it's Mrs. Burchell that's at the bottom of it all.

"Anyhow, an hour afterward I have Shorty Graham on his way to Fairbanks with a telegram to Frisco, and instructions not to return without a reply.

"Since then, Sam, I've been quietly organizing the lady cooks and a lot of the batchers that put time in on the hall. And tonight I'm going up there with a chip on each shoulder and a club in each hand. I'll show 'em where they're at!"

Aaron rises and throws away the stump of his cigar, and from the look in his face, those that cross his path this night have my sympathy. I see the finish of the Entrenoo Club.

"Now then," he resumes before I've time to say a word, "it's your turn to get busy." He handed me a collar with a grin-and-bear-it look. "Then we'll go up to the Golden Flat hotel for supper."

With the aid of a punch, a gimlet, a pair of plyers, a piece of rabbit wire and three kinds of language I get a collar and tie on him in a manner that precludes the slightest possibility of him losing it.

After Aaron has calmed down somewhat and admired himself in the glass, I observe he's tickled to pieces. But every now and then I hear him muttering strange words to himself and waving his hand, as if he was practising oratory; and I know there's going to be something doing on the hill this night.

ON THE way up to the burg we pick up Liza, Juby and the kids, and we all have supper in the Golden Flat. As I'm eating I can't get the face of Slocum Mary out of my mind. She was in the living-room when Aaron and I arrived, and

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there seems to be nothing left of her but her eyes, black, sunken, shrinking orbs, in which there's the wildest appeal for a little sympathy I ever saw exude from a human being. Juby Martin, I think, has actually grown fond of her.

After supper and the womenfolks have left, Aaron, after looking me over, says—

"Sam, with that parkey of yours, cotton for a whisker, a red toque and some bells you'd make a dandy Santa Claus."

I jumped to my feet trembling all over.

"Aaron," I gasped, "you don't think I'd get up in front of a lot of people and——"

"And why not?" he demanded. "There ain't half a dozen folks know you're in camp yet—though it ain't so long ago when the whole burg would have known it by your wolf-howl within thirty seconds. And, anyway, who's to know who you are when you're all fixed up? And just think of the fun you'll be giving the kids."

That last appeal goes home.

"But they're sure to have got one already, Aaron," I replied, weakening.

"Tush, that's easily fixed. Sam, I've got a purpose in asking you to be Santa. As for the Entrenoo's choice for the position—leave that to me. You're it."

With which we go into executive session, during which Aaron partly—only partly—unfolds his scheme for bringing the Sulphurites back to their senses. Aaron is a hard man when he's roused.

WHEN Liza, Aaron and I arrive up at the hall there's only a few there, so we take a front seat. We're there but a few minutes when Shorty Graham staggers in, and hands a telegram to Aaron.

In his impetuous way Aaron tears it open, reads it at a glance, wrings Shorty by the hand until he almost faints, then puts it in his pocket. I see his jaws set.

Within fifty minutes, with few exceptions every Sulphurite is seated and fidgeting for things to commence. I notice that the goats—that is, the batchers and the lady cooks—have seized the benches on one side of the hall, thus forcing society to take the other side.

There's a mighty perplexed look on the face of Hank Burrows, who seems to be master of ceremonies. And there's amazement and indignation in the faces of the social ewes. It's clear to be seen they look upon us as interlopers.

Hank's face clears as Dickson Burchell, dressed like a waiter in a 'Frisco hotel, and his wife dressed like—well, when she took off her fur coat I had to blush. Hank, who has kept two places for them in the front bench, shows them to their seats. But before sitting down the lady turns and, with a shrug of a bare shoulder and an upcurl of the lip, scowls at the non-eligibles.

Hank Burrows, with a smirk like an over-boiled potato, is about to ascend the platform. Aaron reaches forth a hand and, catching him by the sleeve, whispers a few words in his ear. Hank just gaups. Burchell has risen and walked to the end of the row as if waiting a signal. Toward him Aaron bends unyielding steps and, with his back to the audience shows him the telegram. Burchell nods coolly, but I see the white creep into his face. Aaron, then, to the astonishment of the Entrenoo Club, ascends the platform.

Unfalteringly approaching the little table, he takes a sip of water like an old stager, then turns and looks down at the surprise party. Mrs. Burchell and Mrs. Burrows, her right-hand bower, look as if they'd blow up at any moment. The faces of the lady cooks are wreathed in coy smiles, and the kids are trying to see behind the muslin curtain that hides the Christmas tree.

"Friends and fellow Sulphurites," Aaron begins. "Of late, I guess I've forgotten to wind up my civic pride, but it's never too late to take up the white man's burden. As the discoverer of Sulphur Flats, I propose to celebrate the tenth anniversary by making you a speech on slogans."

He makes a pause. I must say I don't like the tone of the beginning. It isn't what I expected. I kinda thought something would be doing by this time. Slogans? What's a slogan? I asked Liza. She just gives me a look. I'm reconciled to anything that takes place now.

"As I already observed," Aaron resumes, "it was on a Christmas Day I struck the pay on the Flats. For a few days previous to that there had been two men hanging 'round who didn't seem to be doing much in particular. They were, however, greatly interested in my progress.

"Next day I started for Fairbanks to record—no trail then, either. Of course I gave out the news as soon as I had my claim on record.

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"When I got back to the creek I found those two men staking the last claim. It's a fact. They had staked every claim on the creek, barring my own, from the mouth up. I came upon them unexpectedly.

"As all of you know who have ever been on a stampede the curse of Alaska has been the professional staker. I myself havin' been stung that way after many a long, hard stampede.

"I told them to throw up their hands. They complied, seeing I had the drop on them. Then I asked them whether they'd have one claim or no claim at all. They replied that it was perfectly legal to stake as many claims as they had powers of attorney. Their pockets were full of 'em.

"One of these two men, ladies and gentlemen, is with us here tonight."

He looks at Burchell. Every pair of eyes in the house is presently focused upon him. There is a thin smile on his lips. Aaron resumes.

"A little while later the main gang of stampeders arrive—many of whom I see here tonight. You know the rest. A vote was taken and they were given five minutes to make themselves scarce.

"On that occasion, friends, my slogan was 'One man one claim.' If there's pay in it, one is enough. If there ain't—then it's too ——, I mean, it's far too much. It's owing to that fact that Sulphur operators won their own ground, instead of paying all the way from twenty-five to forty per cent. royalty on their gold output for a lease. Which brings me to my second slogan, 'God hates a hawg.'" Again he looks at Burchell.

"There's something about Christmas that gets everybody's go—I mean, that hits every one of us in the same place. It's a universal proposition that nobody with any sort of a paystreak in his heart can afford to overlook. And God help those in whose hearts the well of human kindness has gone dry."

He pauses and looks quietly at the faces in front of him. There's quite a little squirming going on in society. Mrs. Burchell's eyes are on the toes of her slippers.

"For, on such a night as this, so I'm told," he resumes irrelevantly, "almost two thousand years ago, a Kid was born in a stable in a poor man's diggin's not far from a place called Bethlehem. His folks have been playing in hard luck—and who don't run on to a streak of poor pay once in a while?—and they're strictly up against it; ain't even got the price of a meal or a bed at the roadhouse, an' they's nothing left to them but the barn.

"To make things worse they's a shyster king called Herod layin' in wait to get the Kid, for it seems it's been foretold that when He grows up He's gonna make things hum for guys like him.

"In despite of all that, no sooner does this little Checkako give his first cry than, so I'm told, a mighty choir of angels descends over that barn and hails Him as the real true Saviour of the world, and they sing 'Peace on earth, good-will to men,' which is a mighty good slogan."

I'm disgusted with Aaron; thoroughly disgusted. Is this the showing up he was going to give them? I'll be hanged if some of them, Mrs. Burrows included, are not sniffling. But listen.

"Yes sir, it's a great slogan. As the poet says, it's been echoin' down the tunnels of time, skyhootin' 'round the creeks and gulches, the prairies and towns, the deserts and cities, and bids fair to be among the first to reach the tape in the end.

"I'm sure glad to see all the kids here tonight. Myself, I was drug up by the hair of the head in the front yard of a desert, consequence was I had to go without Christmas presents and trees, and Santa Claus and stockings and all that. I'm glad there won't be any kid on Sulphur Flats in that position this night. For we're gathered here together to do honor to that Little Fellah I've just been speaking about, who had a mighty hard row to hoe, and besides invented the greatest slogan ever written, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"

I started. That was my cue to duck and become Santa Claus. And what between the crying and applauding I got away unnoticed.

Behind the hall where my team is lying I come across another Santa Claus. I'm on the point of throwing him down the hill, but shakes hands with him instead. The other Santa insists that I, being a friend of Aaron's, have the first claim, so I dons my disguise, pushes open the back door a little bit and waits for my next cue. A band of kids, led by Miss Preston, the schoolma'am, are singing something about "Glory to the New-Born King."

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The moment they finish I give my lead dog the word and we bound in the door and on the stage as the curtain goes up. For a minute I'm a little mite afraid and edge nearer to Aaron, who seems to have a corner on the ice. The kids are standing in their seats hollering. Aaron gives me a signal and I picks up an engine and a train of cars and hands it to him. He reads the card and, as coolly as you please, steps forward and cries—

"Jack Martin."

Talk about a silence. Oh, my! Aaron with a puzzled frown looks over the faces.

"What," he cries in surprise, "ain't Jacky Martin present? Then the proceedin's won't proceed until he and his sister arrive. Who'll go get them?"

I've read about women at a bargain sale and at certain weddings, but the way those women pushed and crowded one another to be the first to reach the door was the maddest stampede I ever saw. Mrs. Burchell is the only one left; then even she, after a look at Burchell, who hasn't moved since Aaron spoke to him before going on the platform, grabs her coat, and with something mightily like a gulp, hurries to the door and disappears.

She's not gone three seconds when the women return, Mrs. Burrows carrying Jacky Martin, and Mrs. Blanchard, Muriel, his little sister, and right out in front and rigged out in a way I could never have believed possible, was Juby herself. My, but she's a fine-looking woman! Liza is leading her by the hand.

"Ah, here we are!" cries Aaron, just as if the whole episode had been a mistake. "Come up, Jacky, and get your presents."

After that everything is plain sailing. Never was such a night of enjoyment on Sulphur. And curiously enough, no one seemed to notice the absence of Dickson Burchell and his wife.

It's about midnight maybe when Aaron gives Billy Fitzmaurice, the commissioner, the wink. It's easily the highest point he has ever reached. The folks don't tumble until Billy places Juby's hand in his and the ceremony begins. It's then Liza whispers me that I'd make a better best man without a cotton whisker, so I removes it.

Everybody crowds up on the platform. The Entrenoo Club is forgotten, they are Sulphurites once more, each one calling the other by her first name, and those that aren't laughing are crying.

AFTER the dance we returned to Juby's place. Mrs. Burchell is sitting by the bedside of Slocum Mary, holding her hands. I was struck by the resemblance between them, a something about their eyes. They were sisters! Mary is looking like another person. It's plain she's due for a fast recovery. Burchell is also there, the white flag flying.

I nudged Aaron.

"How did you remember him?" I whispered.

"Because he couldn't pronounce the letter 'n,'" Aaron replies. "He pronounced attorney, 'attormey.' He had me goin' for a while, because then he wore a whisker. I guess he wanted to collect some royalty. I wonder how much he has made at poker?"

He takes the telegram from his pocket and gives me a glance at it before shoving it in the stove. It was from the president of Gold Dredging, Incorporated, San Francisco. It contained three words, "Don't know him." We left the three by themselves.

Burchell is gone before daylight next morning.

Mrs. Burchell and Mary Dodge, previously known as Slocum Mary, are now the proprietors of "The Golden Flat Laundry and Bathhouse." And the women say the former is the finest ironer in the country.

WHEN I began this narrative I vowed to myself I wouldn't look down the tunnel to see if the candle still burned until I had finished it; for I knew that, if the worst befell, Liza knew where to find me. I wanted to give her every show in the world during the crisis. I now raised my eyes and looked across the grim white veil of the gulch. Even as I gazed, the light died. Darkness fell upon me. Oh, Little Fellah, Little Fellah! I bowed my head.

I do not remember running down the tunnel or across the gulch.

"Liza needs me, Liza needs me!" I repeated mechanically.

I open the door softly. Liza is applying a match to a new candle.

"S-s-sh!" she whispers. "He's better. I had to break open a new box of candles."

Say, ain't you glad to be alive?

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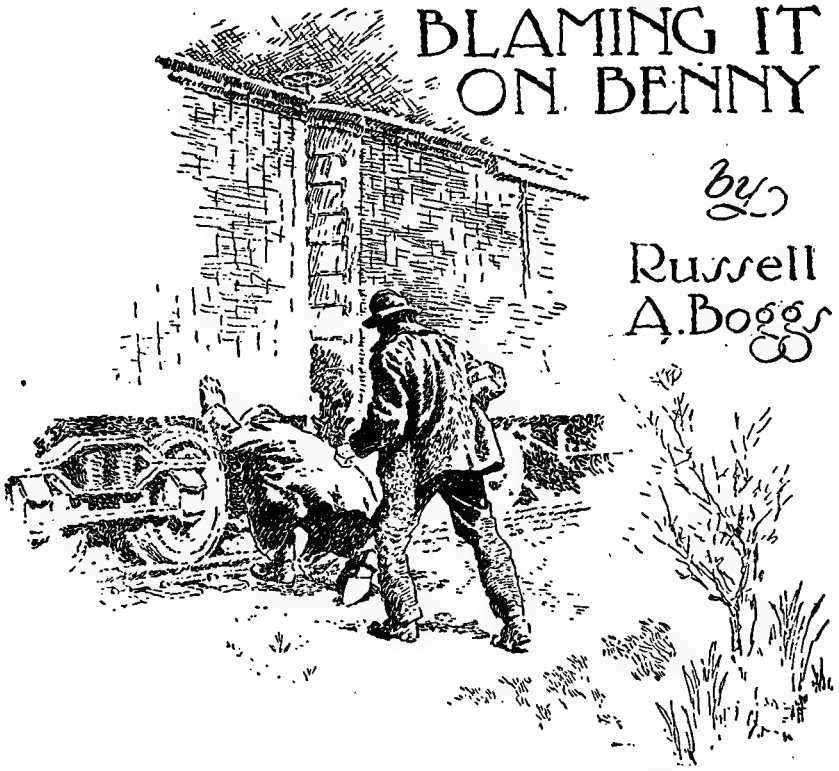
BLAMING IT ON BENNY

by Russell A. Boggs



Author of "The Old-Timer," "The Education of Mr. Giles," etc.

HARLAN, General Manager of the J. Y. & O., looked soberly across his office at his son, young Wesley.

"It seems to me," he said, with a touch of irritation in his voice, "that you should be getting old enough to know better."

He tapped his desk a little.

"But it seems not. Each of your escapades appears to grow a little worse than the preceding one. Now this last affair approached dangerously close to the limit—and I can not always stand between you and open disgrace."

Young Wesley Harlan, assistant trainmaster on the Central Division of the J. Y. & O., good-looking in a handsomely wilful way, looked uncomfortably from the window of his father's office. He wished the old man would finish; he'd promised to meet Benny Woodruff at five, and here it was four-forty-five now.

The general manager of the J. Y. & O. kept his sober gaze fixed on his son's half-averted face, his deep-set, keen gray eyes cloudy beneath his shaggy brows; the stern lines around his mouth unconsciously relaxed a trifle.

He was getting old, the general manager was. Soon would come the time for him to step down and out—for a younger man. And his dream that this younger man might be—if not immediately, yet some time in the not too distant future—his son, seemed in a fair way to be a hopeless, an idle, one. In keeping with this dream, or ambition, young Wesley, after a rather precipitate course in the rudiments of railroading, had been appointed assistant trainmaster of the Central Division; this had taken place a scant nine months before the date of the present interview.

Young Wesley had ability, and he got along well with his men; they were all his good friends—as witness his warm friendship with young Benny Woodruff. But Wesley appeared not always able to hold himself in; he had occasional lapses to the abandon of his somewhat hilarious college days—lapses when he kicked over and out of the traces of serious officialdom; then the white lights knew him, and the midnight

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sons and daughters, and duty knew him not, sometimes for several days at a stretch.

Private reports of these shortcomings reached the general manager's ears, causing hours of poignant regret, and bitterness—but mostly regret. The general manager had tried gentleness with his son; it did no good. He tried mild censure; it was no better. He tried sternness; to no avail. And now had come this latest episode—wherefore the present interview.

The Central Division had a queer sort of an inspection car, a grotesque-looking affair which had been made by building a stumpy passenger coach over a locomotive. In the front sat the fireman and engineer, separated by a partition from the rear of the coach where was the compartment for the inspectors. This inspection vehicle Wesley, two days previously, had commandeered, ostensibly for railroad business.

But that night strange whispers traveled over the wires and by word of mouth of a careening inspection car dashing headlong over the division, and of the sounds of roisterous mirth issuing from behind the drawn shades of that usually staid coach. News of this of course came to the general manager. So he summoned his son.

Harlan, Sr., straightened up in his chair and the lines of his face grew stern again.

"This last affair has got out," he went on. "We've done our best to hush it up, but some of the men have heard rumors."

He tapped his desk again to attract his son's attention.

"How do you imagine that will affect discipline," he demanded, "and respect?"

The son turned reluctantly for a second.

"Oh, shucks, dad!" he said a little uncertainly. "It was nothing—just a few friends."

He turned to the window again.

"Friends!" said the general manager rather bitterly. "You call them friends! Good friends to lose, I'd say! And young Woodruff—I suppose he was with you?"

Once more Wesley turned, and this time he eyed his parent with sullen defiance.

"Now don't ask me who was along. I'll take all the blame——"

The father waved an impatient hand.

"All right—all right!" he broke in. "You don't need to admit it; I know he was with you, anyway. What do you see in this young Woodruff, Wesley?"

"Benny's all right," said Wesley with what sturdiness he could muster.

"Doubtless!" Sarcasm filled the general manager's voice. "He'd have to be all of that, to travel with you."

He was silent a moment and his eyes dropped from his son's countenance to the floor. When he looked up again his face wore a gentler expression than it had.

"Son," he said simply, almost pleadingly, "why don't you stop all this foolishness? Surely you realize that it's time you did."

The son shifted uneasily.

"I'm doing my best, dad," he said sulkily. "A fellow can't settle down all at once—he's got to sort of taper off." He hesitated as if searching for words. "I'm doing my best," he then repeated, lamely.

"No," said the general manager, still in the same almost-pleading voice, "you're not doing your best. You can do better than you have been."

The son was silent. He glanced at his watch and fidgeted; it was four-fifty-five, now.

"Things have not been going well on the Central Division," said the general manager, as if reminding his son of something.

Young Wesley knew what his father meant; he had been expecting this reference to the recent trouble they had been having with the Beef Special.

THE Beef Special was a stock train, traveling daily from Chicago to the East. Other stock trains there are, but only one such as this, forty cars of prime beef, hurrying to the seacoast on schedule time. A surpassing train, a train of much steady revenue. And not only a train of goodly revenue; it was a train of much prestige, because where goes the Beef Special other lesser trains follow. This had long been a maxim. Hence rivalry, deep and bitter, among a half-dozen roads for the special.

Two years since the J. Y. & O. had triumphantly lured the stock train away from all rivals, to the J. Y. & O's. well-being and to the others' dismay. And carrying the special had gone well with the J. Y. & O. up until a month or so before young Wesley's joy-ride in the inspection car. Then things began to happen to the stock train—delays, maddening in their persistency.

Delays to the train were not good for the J. Y. & O., part of their agreement

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being that the stock train would be delivered at destination on schedule a certain percentage of times to the month. Failure to do this meant cancellation and diverting to some competitor line—and the narrow margin, or percentage, that meant failure had come perilously close to being used up, due to the delays resulting from a succession of minor accidents: breaking air-hose, defective brakes, pulling out drawheads, breakdowns of the locomotives, and once by a broken wheel-flange, this latter fortunately being discovered before serious damage resulted.

These minor accidents—which, by an apparent coincidence seemed always to occur on the Central Division—had at first been thought to be merely the result of chance; but when they persisted investigation, keen and sharp, was made; and investigation revealed that while once or twice the accidents might have come from natural causes, nevertheless in the majority of the cases they had not. Human hands had assisted—tampering had been done; the J. Y. & O. turned suspicious eyes upon its neighbors.

By a process of elimination suspicion finally rested upon a certain powerful traffic official of one of the neighbors; a sly man he was, an unscrupulous man, a man with great ambitions; which ambitions would be greatly advanced if he could win the Beef Special to his line. Nothing definite could as yet be fastened on him, however; but the certainty was there.

This, then, was to what the elder Harlan referred when he said things had not been going well on the Central Division. Wesley fidgeted restlessly again, but he still maintained his rather sulky air of indifference.

"The chairman of the board of directors spoke to me this morning," pursued the general manager. "He said the delays to the Beef Special must stop. Also, he intimated that a closer, stricter watch must be kept on the Central Division."

The general manager paused for an instant, as if reluctant to say more; then he went on, like a man who is determined to see something unpleasant through.

"And finally, Wesley, he intimated that reports of your unsteadiness had come to him. Just a hint he dropped—but that was enough. One more breaking over and you must go, that was the sum and substance of it."

Once again the general manager paused. He might have said more; he might have said that the chairman had also intimated that if the delays to the special were not overcome the elder Harlan's own position would be endangered. Still, for some reason the general manager did not say anything to Wesley about that; somehow he shrank from any reference to it, preferring to keep the knowledge of it away from his son; but the knowledge weighed upon the father, oppressed him.

Wesley's face had flushed at his father's concluding words.

"Did he say that?" he cried resentfully. "Does he think he can scare me that way?"

He strode to his father's desk, drew a pad of paper to him and picked up a pen.

"I'll give him my resignation right now!" Wesley exclaimed, dipping the pen in the ink. "I'll not tolerate his insinuations that my negligence is responsible for the delays to the stock train."

The older man laid a restraining hand on his son's arm.

"No," he said, "not that. That would be quitting under fire—don't you see?"

He took the pen from Wesley's stubborn fingers and replaced it on the desk.

"But I'll tell you what I want you to do, Wes—" the father's voice dropped into an intimate, friendly pitch —"I want you to meet the special every day at Riverton, the western end of your division, and ride it clear through to Stratford, the eastern end. Make a personal inspection of the engine and every car before you get on and then keep your eyes wide open until you leave the train at Stratford. Look after it yourself and I'll wager we can put her through on schedule, and maybe discover who has been responsible for the delays."

The general manager's hand still rested affectionately on his son's arm.

A little shame-faced, a little at a loss for words, and a little resentful, the son looked at his father. He struggled with his pride for a moment—then extended his hand.

"All right, dad," he said, "I'll do that."

He picked up his hat and without another word left the office.

For a little time after it had snapped shut behind Wesley the general manager sat looking at the door through which his son had departed.

Then he pressed a button on his desk and almost immediately a door on the

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opposite side of the room, a door opposite to the one through which Wesley had gone, opened and a clerk appeared.

"Send Woodruff in," said the general manager.

THE clerk vanished. In a moment the door opened again and a tall, quick-eyed young fellow entered; this was Mr. Benny Woodruff, second trick copy operator in the dispatcher's office of the Central Division.

"Ah, Woodruff!" greeted Harlan, pointing to a chair. "Sit down, please."

Benny moved quickly over the floor and did so, the general manager studying him meanwhile. The close friendship between Wesley and Benny had been somewhat of a scandal, or a constant irritant, to Harlan, Sr. A commissioned officer in the Army or Navy is not expected to make a pal of an enlisted man; neither should a railroad official throw himself into too intimate an association with an employee beneath him; thus reasoned the general manager, and he had been curious to see what manner of man this young Woodruff was.

Secretly the elder Harlan had always held a conviction that Benny's influence over Wesley had not been for the best, that he was to blame for Wesley's digressions from the straight path. This, though, was the first time the general manager had ever come into personal contact with Benny.

Here was no weakling, however. Harlan realized this instantly as he noted the assurance with which Woodruff entered and accepted the chair. There was no embarrassment, no hesitancy in Benny's entry; his manner was alert, sure, and the whole ensemble of his sharp, quick eyes, his clean cheeks and inclined-to-be-humorous mouth was most pleasing. Life might not hold many responsibilities for Benny Woodruff, the general manager decided, but decidedly there was nothing of the jelly-fish about him; Harlan now understood better how the young man had attracted the temperamental Wesley.

Stern measures with Benny would never do, Wesley's father resolved; here was a man who could think for himself, who could be talked to, who could be reasoned with. Harlan immediately switched his previously outlined method of firm procedure with Benny—switched it radically.

"Woodruff," began the general manager, clearing his throat, "you are a friend of my son, Wesley?"

His eyes questioned Benny.

"Yes, sir," replied Benny promptly. "That's right."

His gaze met the general manager's, easily and squarely.

"So I understood," said Harlan. "And that's why I asked you to come to my office."

He straightened in his chair, leaning slightly forward.

"Woodruff," he pursued steadily, "I am going to be perfectly frank with you. I know I can be assured of your entire discretion insofar as what I am about to tell you is concerned."

"You can," said Benny simply, "certainly."

"Good!" said Harlan. "Now pay close attention, please. Probably you suspect why I want to talk to you about Wesley. But I am not going to threaten, or scold, or censure; neither am I going into details about any or all of his shortcomings. I know that you have been with him on most of his backslidings, and that you were with him on his last one.

"That, though, is all beside the mark, Woodruff. The thing is this: Wesley has come to the point where he must either make good, or leave the service, disgraced. One more act of indiscretion will, I am afraid, be his last on this, and probably on any other, road. And it is to prevent this that I am seeking your help.

"I don't need to tell you that this is a most peculiar, a most unusual situation—this in which the general manager goes to one of his operators for help. Nevertheless it is the only, the best way I see."

Benny nodded his appreciation of the situation.

"I believe I understand," he said.

"I felt that you would. And now the next thing. You may, or may not, have heard about the trouble we have been having on account of the recent delays to the Beef Special?"

Harlan looked inquiringly at Benny.

Benny nodded again.

"Yes, I've heard something about it—being in the dispatcher's office like I am."

"And that if we can't improve our handling of the train we are liable, very liable, to lose it—with all that means?"

"Yes," said Benny, "I knew that, too."

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"Well, as you know, most of the delays have been on the Central Division. And, it being a big part of an assistant trainmaster's duty to see that trains move smoothly and expeditiously, Wesley has come in for a whole lot of criticism—particularly as reports of his deflections from the path of duty have reached the ears of some of the board of directors. And it was from the chairman himself that I received the tip that Wesley must either do better or leave, and that the Beef Special must be handled on schedule, or——"

The general manager broke off abruptly, his eyes on Benny's attentive face. And then, suddenly, something prompted Harlan to complete the sentence.

"Or I myself will be displaced," he finished quietly.

Benny stared.

"Did you tell Wesley that?" he exclaimed.

Harlan shook his head.

"No; but I told him of the danger he himself was in. About my own predicament—I couldn't bring myself to mention that to him, although I have to you. I wanted—I wanted——"

Harlan's voice trailed off.

Benny thought he comprehended what the general manager wanted, and something like admiration came into his eyes as he regarded the strong, gray head across from him.

"He wants Wes to make good—and yet he's too proud to inject his own personal welfare into it!" silently reflected Benny.

He all at once bent forward.

"And you think I may be able to help with Wesley?" cried Benny, his sharp eyes shining. "You're asking me to do it?"

"Yes," said Harlan, "that's what I want."

Benny leaped to his feet.

"I'll do it!" he declared, cracking his fist down on the top of the desk. "I give you my word that I'll do all I'm able to put him through."

The general manager also got to his feet, relief in his face.

"Thank you," he said, offering his hand. "I feel your help will mean a lot to Wesley—and to me." He hesitated, a little uncertain. "And you'll not lose anything by it," he promised, "we'll see that you're well taken care of and——"

Benny Woodruff held up a protesting hand.

"Don't!" he said. "Don't spoil it. What I may be able to do will be done for a different reason."

"And what is that?" asked Harlan, secretly well pleased.

"Friendship for Wesley, for one thing," said Benny. "And also—well, we'll say also because it pleases me to do so. I often do things for no better reason than that."

WHEN Wesley, after leaving his father's office, arrived at the restaurant where he was to meet Benny Woodruff, Benny was not there. Wesley fretted away a good half-hour, waiting, before Benny did come; of knowledge of Benny's visit to the general manager's office, Wesley had none.

"I was late getting here myself," complained Wesley, dropping into a chair at a table, "and then I have had to wait thirty minutes on you."

"Sorry," said Benny, "but I got held up myself." He sat down opposite Wesley. "What's on your mind?" he asked with subtle guilelessness.

Wesley groaned.

"Everything's up a tree! The old man gave me a jolly good going over. Said I'd have to do better or they'd tie the can on—seems he got wind of our little party the other night. Complained about the beastly delays the Beef Special's been getting on the Central Division—said I'd have to ride it every day over the whole division. Insinuated that the board of directors thought the delays partly came from my negligence—oh, a lot of dashed unpleasant things he brought up!"

Wesley slammed his fist on the table.

"—— the board of directors!" he ejaculated angrily. "I'm going to have another drink."

He held up a hand for a waiter.

"No, sir!" declared Benny promptly. "Not yet—we've got to talk this thing over, first. Did you promise the old man you'd reform?"

"Well," reluctantly admitted Wesley, "not exactly. But I think I gave him to understand that I'd try to do better."

"Exactly!" said Benny. "And if you think it's trying very hard to order a drink the first chance you get, why, I don't."

Wesley gazed in astonishment.

"For the love of Hannah! You too!" He threw up his hands in despair. "Everybody's preaching at me today!" he wailed.

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"It's about time," said Benny mercilessly. "I've been getting worried about you."

"Stop it—stop it!" cried Wesley. "You're no blooming saint yourself."

"Maybe not. In fact, I'll admit it," came back the unruffled Benny. "But I'm different—I've got no responsibilities like you have." He aimed a steady finger at his friend. "You're not going to have that other drink—and you're coming with me, right now."

"Coming with you—where?" demanded Wesley.

"Back on the job!" Benny rose to his feet. "Come on—we've just time to catch Number 37."

Wesley, strangely non-resistant, shoved back his chair. He seemed bewildered by the sudden turn of events, by the sudden masterfulness in Benny.

"I'd never, never have thought it of you, Benny!" he vowed.

He all at once hung on his friend's arm as a thought seemed to flash upon him.

"Benny," he gasped weakly, "have you —are you going to help to reform me?"

"Lord pity you!" said Benny firmly, "I am!"

II

THE high official was not pleased; he frowned; he looked with displeasure at his two henchmen. The latter were crafty-eyed, crafty-faced creatures; they had the appearance of erstwhile gentlemen at present gone to seed, or come upon hard times.

"What's the matter now?" flared the official. "Here I've been waiting for nearly two weeks—and nothing happens. A pretty case! What's the matter, I say?"

The two henchmen squirmed before the high official's glare and frown. The tall, long-nosed one spoke up.

"He's been riding the special every day —watches it like a cat, and we don't get a show. That's all."

The high official snorted his contempt.

"Get him out of the way then," he said brutally. "Drop a brick on him—throw him over a hill—anything!"

He waved his hand.

The short, sleek-faced henchman answered this time. He fixed a steady eye on the fuming high official.

"You forget," he said with calm preciseness. "We bargained to cause delays to a train, not death to a man.''

His diction was that of a careful and quaint scholar; he faced his fellow henchman.

"I believe, Barstow," he said, "that our dealings with this man are done. Let him find helpers like himself—we are no murderers."

The high official whirled on him in a fury, his gross face working.

"Be careful! Remember your contract has not been fulfilled—and you'll have no reward until it has been!"

The sleek one smiled maddeningly.

"Be careful yourself. Remember this, too, Mr. Officialman: fulfilled or not, we'll have our pay—or we'll have your hide. A pretty tale we have to unfold to the proper authorities—a tale that will be unfolded, too, if there is any holding out on your part."

Some of the arrogance vanished from the high official's face.

"You wouldn't dare—" he stumbled. "Think of yourself—you wouldn't dare!"

"There's a way by which you can find that out," said the sleek one calmly.

Long-nosed Barstow thrust himself in as peacemaker.

"Here—here—this is not getting us anywhere!" he remonstrated. "Mr. Official, Drasman here is right—we haven't quite reached the bottom yet. If a man dies in the course of our business, that's different; but we do not deliberately plan to see that he does.

"And you, Drasman, put up your tongue. You misunderstand the gentleman—he means no real harm. Let's all be reasonable. We'll pool our thoughts and see whose is best."

He hitched his chair forward and glanced at the sleek one.

"Do you happen to have any plan or scheme in your head?" he asked.

Drasman shook his head sullenly.

"No," he said shortly.

Long-nose turned to the high official.

"And you?"

"No," said the official irritably. "And even if I had it would be hopeless, with such dunderheads to carry it out."

"Tut, tut!" said Barstow. "Don't be so peevish." He smiled in a conciliatory way. "I have, though—a good plan."

The high official sneered.

"I'll wager on it! Most of your plans are good—for nothing."

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"That's cheap wit. Nevertheless, this is a good plan, and simple. Will you listen?"

"Oh, go ahead with it." It was patent that the high official had no great hopes.

"Well, then; in our dealings we have been counting on young Harlan's inexperience; and judging by our first results we were right. Isn't that so?"

The high official inclined his head in affirmation.

"Yes," he admitted.

"Well, we reasoned wrongly. It was not his inexperience that favored us—as mark our helplessness during the past two weeks. It was something else."

"What was it, then?" The high official showed more interest.

"I've heard rumors lately," continued Barstow. "Just yesterday, in fact. Rumors in which apparently there is a lot of truth, this: young Harlan is something of a high-flier. Does that reveal anything to you?"

The high official wagged his head, puzzled.

"I'll explain," said Barstow. "Instead of it being his inexperience that played into our hands it was this tendency of his, this seeking of the flesh-pots that caused him to be absent from duty, and, when on duty, often incapable of looking after things as he should. This we did not know, and when his sudden energy and watchfulness thwarted us recently we were perplexed, up in the air; we could not understand it. Now that I've heard these rumors, however, the explanation is simple: some one has tightened the screws on him—his old man, likely."

The high official now was altogether interested.

"And what's the plan?" he demanded.

"Unloose the screws," said Barstow.

III

AS SECOND trick copy operator in the dispatcher's office, Benny Woodruff worked from 3 P. M. until 11 P. M. At eleven-ten on a night some two weeks after his interview with General Manager Harlan, Benny came blithely down the stairs from the dispatcher's office, and paused just outside the main door of the division headquarters building. It was raining, a steady drizzle falling on to the glistening asphalt and pavements. Umbrellaless, Benny turned up his coat collar, thrust his hands into his coat-pockets and strode away toward his car-line, two blocks distant.

Half-way to his car-line, the rain suddenly increased into a soaking downpour. Benny looked around. The light above and below the swinging doors of a café gleamed invitingly. He went in—and, seated at a table in a corner twenty feet from the door, he beheld young Wesley Harlan. With Wesley were two companions, a tall, long-nosed man and a short, sleek-faced man; and on the table around which the three sat were bottles, several of them.

An expression of mingled dismay and embarrassment came over Wesley's face as he looked up and perceived Benny. He hesitated a second, but apparently seeing that attempt at concealment was useless, he smiled brightly.

"Naughty! Naughty!" said Wesley playfully as Benny approached the table; he shook a self-reproving finger in his effort to appear at ease. "Mustn't scold, Benny!"

Wesley's face was flushed, his eyes twinkled. Here was a nice to-do! Benny repressed a frown and considered the two companions. Plainly his coming was not pleasing to these; their faces were cold; they exchanged swift, unpleasant glances with each other. Quick-eyed Benny noted this suspiciously, and for some reason his senses instantly snapped alert.

"Here's a couple of good fellows from the Western coast," prattled on Wesley, "railroaders just like us. And of course I got to show 'em 'round a little."

Wesley smiled energetically.

"Mr. Tindall, meet my friend Mr. Benjamin Franklin Woodruff. Mr. Healey, you do the same."

They shook hands all around, Wesley insisting on joining in. They all sat down; and Wesley evidently felt called upon for further explanations.

"You see, Benny," he said half-apologetically, "riding an old cow train ev'ry day's no good fun—awful monot'nous. Was gettin' to be a reg'lar cow-puncher!" He giggled a little foolishly. "That's it—cow-puncher! Ever hear of a feller punchin' cows at thirty-five miles 'n hour, Benny? That's me—punchin' cows at thirty-five miles 'n hour!"

His face beaming, Wesley looked around for approval.

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Long-nosed Mr. Tindall and sleek-faced Mr. Healey proclaimed their approval by loud, hearty laughter, meanwhile turning sharp eyes on Mr. Benny. Mr. Benny did not overlook this scrutiny; obviously they were watching to see how he received Wesley's remarks—this in order that they might trim sails accordingly.

Mr. Benny, planning swiftly, laughed too, doubling over in his chair.

"You beat the devil, Wes!" he ejaculated; he looked at Tindall. "Doesn't he?"

"He does!" agreed Tindall, plainly much relieved.

He reached a hand for the nearest bottle.

"Let's drink one to the cow-puncher!"

He filled Wesley's empty glass, brimming; from a waiter he got a glass for Benny and filled it, brimming; he poured into Mr. Healey's glass and into his own—but made these two not nearly so full.

They raised their glasses and the cow-puncher was duly pledged, Wesley draining his at a gulp. Benny's glass was not half-emptied when he replaced it on the table; those of Mr. Tindall and Mr. Healey but little more than tasted. Benny missed neither the filling of the glasses nor the degree of their present emptiness; however he appeared not to notice. Nevertheless, he felt his suspicions had been confirmed; so he proceeded forthwith along the lines of the plan he had swiftly formed. He smiled at Mr. Tindall.

"So you and Mr. Healey are from the coast, eh? Well, well! Used to work out that way myself. What road did you say you were with?"

Neither Mr. Tindall nor Mr. Healey had said; but Mr. Tindall answered promptly—

"The L. & N. J."

"Is that so?" cried Benny. "Why, I was on that road, too! What division?"

Mr. Tindall looked a little disconcerted.

"The—the Mountain Division."

Benny slapped his leg and turned to Wesley.

"Would you believe it?" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "From the Mountain Division—right where I used to be stationed!" Benny turned to Mr. Tindall again. "Of course you know Dave Walderdice—Old Dave, everybody called him—dispatcher on the southern end?"

Mr. Tindall hesitated a second; he sent a helpless, imploring glance across to Mr. Healey; Mr. Healey looked equally lost.

"Why—oh, yes, of course—Old Dave!" struggled Mr. Tindall, toying nervously with his glass. "Yes, everybody knows him—good old scout, Dave is."

"None better!" affirmed Benny. "Yes, sir, there's none better than Old Davy!"

Benny glowed at Wes, to conceal his satisfaction; because Benny had never worked on the Mountain Division, or any other division, of the L. & N. J. Neither, to the best of his knowledge, had Old Dave Walderdice! In fact, Old Davy was a purely fictitious character, invented on the spur of the moment for a purpose. The invention had served the purpose well. In consequence, Benny grinned at Wesley, and promptly went ahead with his plan. Things were looking up.

Wesley, however, threatened for a moment to wreck the smooth course of developments. Wesley leaned heavy elbows on the table and reached for a bottle.

"Let's shoot one to Old Davy!" he suggested, pouring out another brimming glassful. "Fill 'em up, ev'rybody."

He raised his glass.

"Old Davy!" he toasted, and drank.

Benny sat up. This was getting serious—he'd have to pry Wesley away before he became utterly helpless.

"Here, Wes!" he cautioned. "Don't go too strong on that. You got to ride the cow train tomorrow morning, you know."

Wesley waved a grandiloquent arm.

"Devil with the cow train! Will have to tod—toddle 'long 'thout Wes t'morr'. Ev'rythin's a'right, Benny—don' need li'l Wesley. All foolishness 'nyway, Benny! Cow train only makes one stop—Crane Creek for water. Nobody wants hurt 'n old cow train!"

THE assistant trainmaster's arm dropped to the table and he leaned heavily upon it, Mr. Tindall and Mr. Healey again exchanging their swift, meaning glances as he did so; this time there was something of triumph in the sly glance.

Benny had gathered that in; also he had perceived the sudden flicker in Mr. Tindall's eye when Wesley mentioned Crane Creek; he now shook his head in humorous dismay at Wesley's plight.

"You old son-of-a-gun!" said Benny affectionately. "But I guess you're right—one day away won't hurt." He winked knowingly at the other two. "Guess I

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better take him home and put him to bed," he said confidentially, dropping his voice. "It'll take him till noon tomorrow to sleep it off as it is, and if I don't get him away he won't know when to stop. He's a corker when he gets started."

Mr. Tindall and Mr. Healey nodded knowingly and affably. It was easily seen that the suggestion suited them, right down to the ground; they made no effort to hide their relief at having the responsibility taken off their hands.

"Yes—sure thing," said Healey, also in a low voice. "You know him better than we do—we'll be much obliged."

"Don't mention it," protested Benny. He got up and caught Wesley's arm. "We'll be going, Wes!"

Wes demurred.

"Sit down! 'S early yet. Sit down!"

Benny firmly drew him to his feet.

"You come right along with me. It's time you were in your little trundle-bed."

Placing one hand in the small of Wesley's back, Benny pushed him ahead.

"We'll see you boys again," he said in farewell to Mr. Tindall and Mr. Healey.

Wesley also looked at the two, his eyes blinking.

"Sure thing—see you 'gain!"

Mr. Tindall and Mr. Healey winked slyly at Benny.

"Sure!" they said together.

Propelling his charge from in back, Benny brought Wesley, still mildly protesting, out to the sidewalk. There Benny hailed a taxi, spoke to the chauffeur, and bundled Wesley inside; he followed himself; slammed the door shut; and, as the taxi started, shook Wesley roughly by the shoulder.

"Wake up—you twenty different kinds of an ass!" Benny cried in Wesley's ear, jerking him meanwhile. "Don't you dare try to go to sleep, you poor nut! Hear me?"

" 'S a'right, Benny," mumbled Wesley, feebly striving to shove him away. "Mus'n't scold. Jus' li'l nap."

"Just you try it and I'll shake all the hair off your scalp!" cried Benny. "Where'd you meet those two fellows?"

"Met 'em—met 'em—" Wesley wrinkled his brow in a painful struggle with his memory; then a benign grin covered his face. "Oh, yes—met 'em in the train-shed lookin' 'round. Inser—intr'duced 'mselves—ash—asked go have li'l drink. Didn' wan' go, but 'nsisted." Wes smiled blandly. "So we went."

Benny grunted and placed his mouth close to Wesley's ear.

"Yes, sure you went!" he shouted with scorn. "Listen! They were looking for you, Wes! They're the boys who've been cutting capers with the Beef Special! This having a little drink was all part of their scheme to get you out of the way!"

Befuddled as he was, the words yet seemed to penetrate into Wesley's brain. He struggled upright on the seat and gaped with uncertain, twinkling eyes at Benny.

"How's—how's 'at?" he stammered. "Tryin' get me 'ntox'cated! What say, Benny?"

"Yes!" yelled Benny. "That's what I said. And tomorrow morning while you're sleeping off your jag they'll be putting the Special on the blink again! Down at Crane Creek's where they'll try to do it, too! I could see it in Tindall's eyes when you mentioned the name."

Wesley rubbed a shaking hand over his brow. He couldn't grasp it all, but he felt, vaguely, that something was in a jam, that he'd made an awful mess of things.

"What say, Benny?" stumbled Wesley, endeavoring to clear a spot in his brain. "Goin' fix Special at Crane Creek?"

"Going to try it!" cried Benny grimly. "You wait—and you'll see!"

The taxi stopped and Benny piled out, dragging Wesley; he paid the driver and started up the steps of a big stone building. Wesley looked around in bewilderment.

"This 's not home, Benny," he protested. "Why——"

"Shut up!" commanded Benny.

He pulled Wesley through the doorway and turned down an electrically lighted corridor. At another door labeled "Turkish Baths" he turned in. An attendant met them.

"Here's a case," said Benny, thrusting the unsteady Wesley forward. "I want him fixed up, good, in not over two hours. Can you make any impression on him in that time?"

The capable-looking attendant grinned.

"Well," he said, "we can make him a lot better than he is now, that's certain."

Benny held out a bill.

"That's the idea! You bring him out here to me in two hours, reasonably sober and steady, and there'll be another like this. Understand?"

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"Ab-so-lutely!" chuckled the attendant. He laid a hand on Wesley's arm.

"Don't be afraid of hurting him," said Benny. "Give him all the works!"

IV

THE performance of the Beef Special in keeping on schedule for two weeks following his talk with his son, Wesley, was pleasing to General Manager Harlan, particularly as it also betokened young Wesley's strict attention to duty.

When the first week had passed, safely, and then the next, with everything going smoothly, the general manager had taken renewed courage. He began to hope, and to believe, that, after all, young Wesley had taken his words to heart and was proceeding to settle down. The general manager's pride awoke when the second week had passed without a slip; and he had a sudden desire to take a little run out and see the boy; perhaps a little word of encouragement and praise would help. The more he thought of it the more resolved the elder Harlan became to go. He'd go, unannounced, meet Wesley, and ride over the division on the Special with him! So he traveled out to Riverton.

The Beef Special was due to reach the western terminal of the Central Division early in the morning—at six o'clock. Twenty minutes before the train was due the general manager arrived at the yardmaster's office in the yards. It was drizzling, foggy and dark. Wesley was not around the office. The general manager waited patiently; Wesley would come.

But six o'clock came, and with it the stock train, promptly on time—and no Wesley. Worried now, and wondering, the general manager went out into the fine drizzle and looked around expectantly into the fog; but he saw no sign of Wesley. And then, thinking that Wesley might arrive before the train departed, he decided to personally inspect the Special and see that everything was in proper shape. He started to walk along the train, eying each car expertly as he went.

When he had completed his swift inspection, finding nothing amiss and no persons with possible evil intent near by, he returned to the yard-master's office. The engines were changed and a new crew took charge of the train. The conductor came down from the telegraph tower with his clearances in his hand—and still no Wesley. A fear that he fought against took hold of Harlan. He cast another anxious glance around into the mist. Wesley had failed; that seemed plain.

Heartsick and possessed of a growing conviction that Wesley must again have broken over the traces, the general manager considered. If Wesley had not wandered off on to the primrose path, why was he not here? The general manager could think of no other plausible reason for Wesley's failure to appear; he wondered, too, if young Woodruff must not be mixed up in it, despite the operator's assurances of assistance; this latter thought irritated Harlan.

But the Special? Suppose something should happen to it on the road, after it left the yards, with Wesley away? The general manager reflected swiftly. They'd blame Wesley. It would mean his dismissal.

The general manager came to a quick decision. He'd take Wesley's place on the Special; he'd go himself!

Hurrying down to the steaming engine, Harlan presented his card-pass as identification to the fireman and engineer. They gaped, stammered a little in their surprise, and invited him into the cab. He climbed up on the seat beside the fireman. The train started immediately and quickly rolled out of the yards.

Thirty miles east of Riverton stands Crane Creek water-tank. There is nothing else there; no town, no station—nothing but the lonely water-tank rising above the surrounding bushes and foliage; the northern edge of the right-of-way is bounded by Crane Creek, a goodly stream from which is pumped the water for the tank. The fog hung thick over the stream and around the water-tower when the stock train drifted in and stopped opposite the water-spout.

General Manager Harlan examined his watch as the Special came to a stop. It was exactly seven o'clock. He climbed down from the cab and strolled back along the cars while waiting for the tender to fill, glancing keenly at the wheels and rigging as he went. His mind was seething with thoughts of Wesley.

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V

IT WAS just after the first faint glow in the fog proclaimed the arrival of dawn that Benny Woodruff and Wesley Harlan dropped from a helper engine at Crane Creek water-tank; they at once hastened west for about a hundred yards, then silently disappeared into the fringe of bushes that lined the right-of-way; the helper engine, after a "drink," went on its way.

"Here," said Benny pausing under some low-hanging bushes from whence a fog-bound view of the tracks in either direction could be had, while they themselves were concealed, "we'll wait here."

He took a folded newspaper from his pocket, tore it in half, tossed one part to Wesley, spread his own half on the dryest spot he could find, turned his coat collar up against the dripping from overhead, and sat down.

Wesley grunted, picked up his part of the paper, and followed Benny's example. Wesley was in pretty good shape, considering. Beyond a doubt he had been given all "the works;" his face was a little pale and strained, his hand a trifle unsteady; otherwise, however, he appeared about as usual. Upon leaving the bath-house with Benny he had accepted his friend's few words and short instructions unquestioningly. Apparently, though, he had been doing much painful thinking, and as he sat down his eyes rested on Benny's face in mute interrogation.

Benny, seeing this, began to laugh silently at Wesley's dismal expression.

"Laugh—darn you!" muttered Wesley. "Maybe it's funny to you—but it isn't to me."

Benny instantly let up.

"Sorry, old boy. But you do look so danged stumped."

Wesley managed a sickly grin.

"I guess I'm pretty rotten, all right. And it gets under my skin the way those two birds roped me in—it hurts my pride."

Wesley fell silent a minute. Then directly he looked at Benny steadily.

"I am pretty rotten, Benny—running out on the old man this way. But I've been thinking pretty hard and straight all the way down here this morning. It makes me sick to think what might have happened if you hadn't come along."

Wesley laid a hand on his friend's knee.

"Believe me or not Benny, but I'm really going to try—the other way!"

"That's the talk, Wes, you stick to that!" said Benny earnestly.

He himself fell silent for a little bit, his thoughts dwelling on his interview with Wesley's father. Benny wondered if it would be exercising discretion to speak to Wesley about that, now that the son was in this mood.

"Wes," he said suddenly, "there's more than your own career bound up in your making good where you are. If you had fallen down on it, if the Special had been ditched today and you not on the job, your father would have lost his place, too."

"What!" jerked out Wesley, straightening up with a snap. "What's that you say? Who told you that?"

"Your father himself—the day he had you up on the carpet, two weeks ago. I talked with him myself, right after you left, and he told me."

"But—" stammered Wesley, "but—he didn't tell me anything about that."

"No," said Benny, "he wouldn't. He'd want you to make good for your own sake; he'd not bring himself into it. Call it pride, if you want. Anyway, I think he had enough faith in you to think you wouldn't need that."

"Good heavens, Benny!" mumbled Wesley.

This was heaping things on pretty thick. He gazed down at the tips of his shoes silently—a long while, this time; and when he finally did turn to Benny again his jaw was set grimly.

"What I said before goes," he said quietly. "Me for the other way, from now on."

"Good boy!" said Benny. "You stick to that, as I said a while ago. And now keep quiet. Those two lads may be showing up at any time now, and we don't want to give ourselves away."

An hour passed while they waited under the bushes, exchanging only occasional whispers. Part of another hour passed. The whistle of the approaching stock train reached them. Benny and Wesley scrambled noiselessly to their feet, crouched alertly behind the screen of bushes, and peered out expectantly while the Special slid to a stop before them.

Four car-lengths east of where Benny and Wesley waited, two stooping figures,

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carrying what looked like some kind of tools, slipped out from the foliage and on to the right-of-way, close up beside the train. Benny touched Wesley's arm and pointed. The two slinking figures cast one hurried glance around, then instantly crawled beneath one of the stock cars.

"Come on!" whispered Benny.

He sprang out through the bushes and ran, followed by Wesley.

The drumming of approaching feet evidently reached the two beneath the car and gave the alarm. There was a scrambling out and the two prowlers leaped to their feet just as Benny and Wesley reached the end of the car. Amazement and incredulity flashed to the faces of long-nosed Mr. Barstow, alias Mr. Tindall, and sleek Mr. Drasman, alias Mr. Healey, as they beheld who approached; their hands flew toward their hip pockets.

"Take the other one, Wes!" shouted Benny, and leaped upon Mr. Barstow.

Benny's right fist landed on Mr. Barstow's nearest projecting facial extremity—this happening to be his chin. The chin and Mr. Barstow gave way on the line of least resistance—this happening to be toward the ground. The back of Mr. Barstow's head collided violently with the end of a hard oak tie, which was enough for Mr. Barstow, temporarily; he lay without further motion. Benny jerked the pistol from Mr. Barstow's pocket. Then he looked to see how Wesley was doing.

Wesley was doing very well. He had fallen on Mr. Drasman like a whirlwind, planting rights and lefts with great relish and abandon to the right and left sides of Mr. Drasman's face. Benny looked around just in time to see Drasman fall, knocked cold; for safekeeping, the enthusiastic Wesley at once fell on him. Benny stopped and took the pistol from Mr. Drasman's, alias Mr. Healey's, rear pocket, also.

"That'll do, Wes," said Benny, straightening up. "Mr. Healey seems past the point where he could say enough, or he probably would. You needn't hold him—he won't run!"

Wesley let loose. It was true, Mr. Drasman, or Healey, had nothing to say. He couldn't.

Wesley heaved a long sigh.

"Well, that's some satisfaction! This is one of the happiest hours of my young and tempestuous——"

"What in the name of Tophet is all this?" exclaimed an astonished voice behind them. "What's going on here?"

Benny and Wesley whirled, and stared in amazement at General Manager Harlan.

"Dad!" cried Wesley, jumping to his feet. "Where'd you come from?"

Dad jerked a thumb at the stock train.

"Off the Special!" Harlan, Sr. looked from his son and Benny to the two limp figures on the ground. "And what have you two been doing?"

His eye sought Benny.

"We've been doing this," said Benny, grinning and pointing at Mr. Barstow and Mr. Drasman. "Here 're the two men who've been tampering with your Beef Special. And I imagine that by the time they've been put through the third degree you'll know pretty nearly who's the who and where behind it all."

The general manager did some registering of amazement himself. Discovery of Wesley at Crane Creek had been astonishing; this news that Benny gave was simply astounding. His recent fears, then, of a renewal of Wesley's waywardness were without foundation. The general manager's eyes suddenly glowed as he turned to his son. This was an achievement! This was something with which to dumfound the chairman and board of directors!

"Wesley," said the general manager, "I —I'm proud of you—proud of you both!" The general manager's voice was a little husky. "How—how did it all come about? How did you come to do it?"

Wesley was feeling pretty shaky around the knees. He had been unable to say a word since his father had told him of being on the Special. The only thing Wesley had been able to think of since that had been of what might have happened if the stock train had been ditched with his father on it, and Wesley sleeping off the effects of his celebration with Tindall and Healey!

But, now that his father had addressed him directly, Wesley pulled himself together as best he could. Trembling a little, he looked squarely at Benny—at Benny Woodruff, of whom Wesley knew his father had not always approved. Gratitude was in Wesley's eyes, gratitude that only Benny saw and understood.

"You can blame it all on Benny!" said Wesley.

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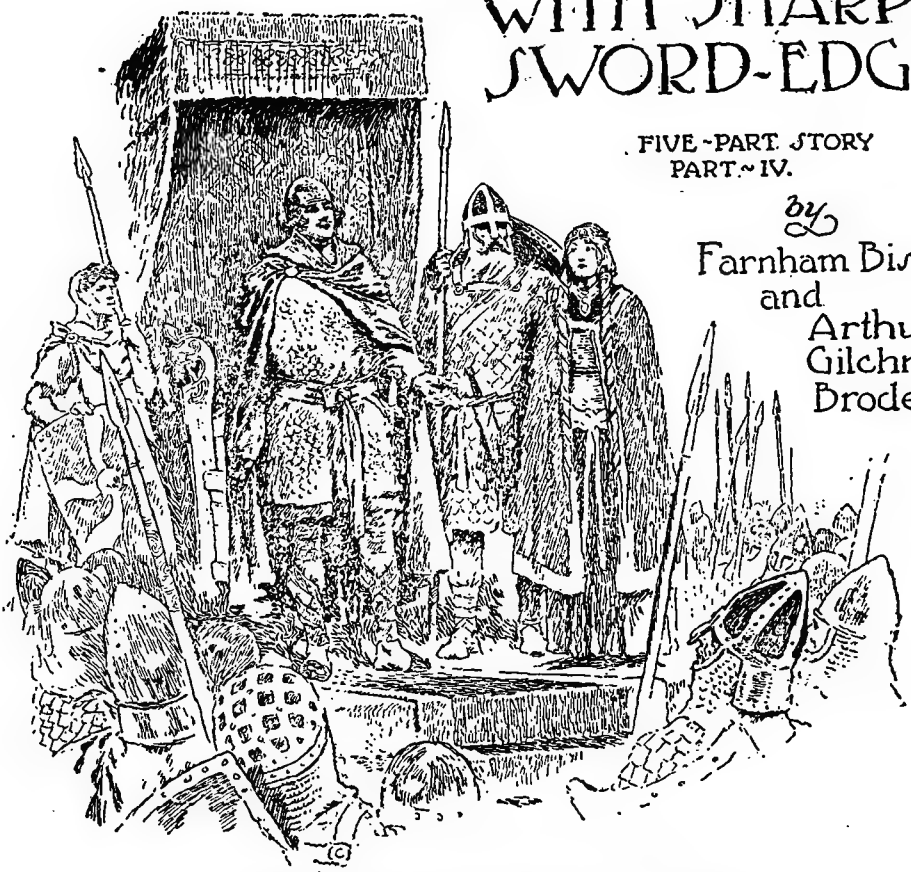
WITH SHARP SWORD-EDGES

FIVE-PART STORY
PART-IV.



by
Farnham Bishop
and
Arthur
Gilchrist
Brodeur

Authors of "In the Grip of the Minotaur," "Malena," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

KING SIGURD, seated at an old Norse banquet-table beside his fair foster-daughter, Gunnhild, and her brother Gunnarr, addressed his warriors—

"Men of Ringariki, I bid you drink to Halfdan, King of a great and new Norway."

At this moment the door opened and Haki, the berserk, entered, evil joy written on his outlaw face.

"That toast is unlucky," he exclaimed. "Halfdan is dead!"

After the astonished warriors had left the hall Haki slyly confided to Sigurd and Gunnhild—

"It will be a merry day for the little kings, now that the old bear rules no more."

"The old bear has left a cub behind, in his son Harald," remarked Sigurd significantly.

"If you desert Harald and make terms with the Five Kings I can promise you safety and honor," suggested Haki.

Sigurd pretended to be in sympathy and drew from Haki the plans of the conspiring little kings of Norway. At length the outlaw disclosed:

"Gandalf of Vingulmark asked me whether I could get rid of Halfdan. It was I who found the way." Then he went on: "This girl here—" nodding to Gunnhild—"give her to me to be my wife—that shall be the payment for your life."

Gunnhild, cheeks ablaze, flashed back—

"Not even to save King Harald's life would I marry you, traitor and king-slayer."

"You have your answer," said Sigurd. "Now go before I slay you."

Clearly, Haki would send a messenger to warn the Five Kings that their plans were known. The messenger must be intercepted. Gunnhild insisted upon doing this single-handed.

She came upon him far out in the snow-covered hills. He was an outlaw, a wild beast such as every honest man killed without compunction. Her spear flew straight and he fell dead in his tracks.

Gunnhild ran to shelter as a troop of warriors approached. Harald and his army stopped, puzzled, before the dead man. Gunnhild stepped out and said—

"I slew the man and for your sake, my King!"

Gunnhild's tall figure was swathed in heavy trousers and her head was well covered. And when the king mistook her for a man she did not disillusion him. He was a lad of only twenty, but she saw that

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he would make a man as great as his father had been.

Gunnhild told of Haki's talk with her foster-father, upon which the young monarch turned to his uncle and directed:

"Guthorm, we will march at once upon my father's murderers." Then to Gunnhild: "Nor will I forget you, boy, when I come to Sigurd's hall."

Several days after this, the disloyal Five Kings were holding a meeting in the hall of the arch-traitor Gandalf—planning the destruction of Harald and each squabbling with the other over the allotment of the lands of Norway when this should come about. Suddenly there came a surging peal outside:

"Harald! Harald! Vengeance for Halfdan!"

The hall had been set afire and the panic-stricken conspirators were surrounded by Harald's warriors. Four of the Five Kings were killed, but Gandalf and the outlaw Haki escaped to the forests.

Harald and his victorious warriors marched to the hospitable hall of Sigurd. When the young king asked for the brave lad who had slain Haki's messenger, Gunnhild arose and left the banquet-hall. Presently she reappeared dressed in boys' clothes. Harald saw and was dumfounded.

"Men of Norway," he cried, "honor and reverence the noblest woman in all the land."

Upon which, Hornklofi, an Irish bard, well knowing Gunnhild's keen capabilities as well as bravery, turned to Guthorm and whispered:

"Some day all of us will do homage to this girl in the king's hall. She will be queen over a wider realm than you or I have yet known."

Days passed and an intimate comradeship grew up between Harald and Gunnhild. Hour after hour they talked and planned of a greater Norway. The king was amazed at the girl's foresight and found her counsel invaluable. Continually did she urge him to build a great fleet of ships; extend his borders; put down lawlessness and give wise government.

Finally one day the young monarch exclaimed:

"With you to aid me, there is nothing I can not do. You shall be my wife, my queen, and together we shall rule over a strong and happy people."

"Harald," she answered, "if you would win me, go forth and take into your hand not this and that poor district, but *all Norway*. Then return and I will be your wife."

"Tomorrow I will leave this house and not return until I am king of all Norway," he vowed. "Until that time comes I will touch neither razor to my cheeks nor shears to my hair."

Harald's plan was to march far north and conquer Thrandheim, the most hostile section in Norway. Such petty rulers on the way as offered resistance would first be subdued and then invited to fight under his banner. Once loyal, they would be permitted to remain masters of their own small realms. In the meantime, the berserk Haki was in hiding, recovering from wounds and tenderly cared for by Thora, sister of Gipull of Sparabu. This young girl had been stolen by the berserk, a wrong he had often promised to right by marrying her. She was living in the hope of this. Now she advised him to go to his hiding-place in Borghus, just over the Swedish border while she traveled to Westfold to learn of Harald's plans.

"Once I am your wife," she continued, "I can persuade my brother to lend us men, gold and influence. Then you shall use the men of Thrandheim to make you king of all Norway."

"And you shall be my queen," he cried. But he chuckled to himself: "A king may have more than one wife and the other shall be Gunnhild."

So it came about that weeks later Thora stumbled into Haki's refuge with news of Harald's plans.

With the first warm days of Spring, Harald and his host marched north. The wild clans of Orkdale were the first to challenge the invasion. But they were no match for Harald's well-disciplined army. After a bloody battle, Gryting, the Orkdale King called for mercy and joined the young conqueror.

"Word of your coming has gone even to Thrandheim," explained the defeated king to Harald. "Haki the berserk sent word."

The young king's army now re-enforced by three hundred Orklanders under command of Gryting set out for Thrandheim.

One day they sighted a host of dragon ships making for land. Strangely enough, the commander made a peace sign instead of giving battle. Then he approached Harald and explained:

"I am Hakon Grjotgardsson, Earl of Yrjar in Thrandheim. I wish to make peace and put my ships at your disposal."

Harald accepted his offer and went on—

"When I have won all Thrandheim, you shall be Earl of Strind and Stjoradale as well as Yrjar."

Days later the army halted between two mighty cliffs, the gateway to the hilly kingdom of Gaulardale and the outpost of the eight Thrandheim realms. The Gaular men had worked to make this point a trap. But so cunning was Harald in approaching it, that the Gaular men themselves became the trapped. Soon the pass was running red with their blood. At length Harald, unable to bear the sight of further slaughter, cried out:

"Enough. This is not war but murder."

It was against the host of the eight kings of Thrandheim, Harald's final goal in the North, that he met the most formidable resistance. And in this battle Harald himself encountered in man-to-man combat, Solvi Klofi, called the Butcher of North Mere. The young king's life was saved in the nick of time by Kolbeinn, the Bear, a young peasant won over from the enemy side.

The Thrandheimers finally were put to rout when their own down-trodden peasants turned against them and took to their ships. But they were rounded up by the fleet of Grjotgard, son of Hakon. Solvi, alone, escaped.

Harald now inaugurated wise government in Thrandheim. Peace and prosperity succeeded the robbery and murder that had gone on for years.

"This is a wise and good king," said the Thrandheimers of Harald.

When Spring should come, Harald intended to set sail and win all Western Norway. From there he would go south and take back his own land of Westfold where the disloyal Gandalf was now entrenched.

One day in late Autumn, Hornklofi, the poet, said to the king:

"Have you forgotten, Harald, that there is a maid in Ringariki who has had no news of you for many months?"

The bard asked permission to go south alone. It was granted.

In the meantime, Solvi had gone to Gandalf's hall with news of Harald's victories. There also, from his refuge went Haki.

Into this warrior and berserk filled hall came the

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wandering Hornklofi, disguised as a broken old bard; his head well covered.

As he sang his sweet melodies, suddenly there rode into the hall a muffled figure on a great black horse. The intruder faced Gandalf and shouted—

"Flee, slayer of a king, for the avenger comes!"

Haki seized away the cloth enveloping the muffled figure's head. It was Gunnhild! She struck with a knife and the berserk fell in a heap.

Hornklofi flung aside his ragged cloak and drew a heavy sword. Instantly he leaped up behind Gunnhild and slapped the horse.

When they were safely away, Gunnhild explained her mad prank—

"I knew Gandalf for a coward and thought I might frighten him away with a tale of Harald victorious and vengeful."

Days later, safe in Sigurd's hall in Ringariki, word came that Haki would recover from his wound. Also it was learned that the berserk had dismissed his mistress, Thora.

And one dark night the hall of Sigurd was attacked by Solvi and the berserks. But they were successfully driven off. Solvi narrowly made good his escape.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WRATH OF THORA

SILENT and grim, the Thrandheim men waited for the king's word. Like the noiseless, heaving billows of an oily Southern sea, their dense-packed heads surged backward and forward over the swarming Plain of Council. All eyes were fixed on the three figures occupying the throned platform before and above them: the stern, majestic Harald, his grave eyes shadowed by a tumultuous mass of gleaming golden hair; a slender, daintily-formed girl with white face and set lips; and Kolbeinn the Bear, whose giant hand clutched the girl's shoulder.

The king rose; and a great sigh of anticipation burst from the assembled people. Harald pointed to the girl, saying:

"It is well for you, my people, and for all Norway, that those who found this woman yesterday listened to Kolbeinn's counsel, and brought her to me. I will have no lawless killings in my kingdom: justice belongs to me, and it shall go hard with him who takes the law into his own hands.

"You claim that this woman is an enemy to the State, and Kolbeinn has asked permission to speak for you. He has my consent. Kolbeinn, state the case of the people against her."

Kolbeinn bowed to the king, and turning, bellowed to the crowd:

"Do I speak the will of the men of Thrandheim? Will ye be bound by what I say?"

"Aye, we will!" they stormed. "Speak for us, Kolbeinn!"

"This, then, is the case. This woman is Thora, sister of the tyrant Gipull, whose rod scourged the flesh of this people, and whose greed starved them till they fainted. Worst of all the Thrandheim kings was he, until Harald brought life and freedom to us, and saved us from worse than death. I, who slew Gipull with my own hand, demand vengeance for our wrongs on all his house; and on this captive, his sister, I invoke the punishment decreed by law against the families of evil-doers.

"The law says that those who rob and murder shall be punished not only in their own persons, but also by the death of all their near kinsmen. Therefore let Thora die for the blood shed by the tyrant, her brother! Yesterday I took her from you, when you had caught her and would have slain her against the law; today I ask that she be slain according to the law!"

The crowd burst into thunderous shouts of applause; but Harald raised his hand for silence, and they became still.

"Ye have heard the accusation," he addressed them, "and the law has been invoked. Now let the woman be heard. Thora, sister of Gipull, is there any cause why you should not die the death prescribed for the kinsfolk of murderers?"

Blanched with terror, trembling violently, Thora turned her eyes to Harald's. Whether because her fear of him was less than her fear of the angry crowd, or whether she saw some faint hint of mercy in his face, she never looked away from the king's eyes while she spoke.

"Harald the King," she said, in a thin, dry voice, "the law which has been invoked against me is evil and unjust. I left this land a mere girl, with no knowledge of the crimes of which my brother is now accused. Perhaps he was guilty of them; I at least am not, and it is not just that the innocent should suffer for the guilty."

Kolbeinn turned sharply on her.

"Aye, she left this land indeed; and therein lies another reason why she should die. She was carried off by Haki the berserk, with whom she has lived ever since.

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Let her say, if she will, that she has had no hand in the crimes of Haki, who, if I remember, numbers the murder of Halfdan among his evil deeds!"

Harald interrupted him.

"Let the woman speak!" he commanded; but a hot light gleamed in his eyes.

Thora, still seeking for some sign of mercy from the king, gathered up all her courage, and resumed:

"Is a feeble girl to be blamed because she is the victim of the strong? It is true that Haki stole me from my home and forced me to do his will; how could I help it? But by the eye of Odin I swear that I have no part in the base deeds that man has on his soul. So far as I could, I counselled him to live peacefully and well. But it is not in him to live honestly. It is because I sought to turn him from his wickedness that he cast me out, heaping reproach upon me.

"Being turned adrift, what was there for me to do? I turned toward my old home, having heard that Harald was king there, and resolving in my heart to demand justice from him against the man who had wronged me. And now, oh King, I do demand that justice; if the law is sacred in your eyes, give me vengeance! Let your valiant sword purchase retribution for my wrongs from Haki, who stole me, a free maiden, and heaped infamy upon me!"

Thoroughly puzzled by this turn of events, Harald looked from Thora to Kolbein, whose face showed cynical disbelief, and from Kolbeinn back to Thora. Finally he seemed to find his way clear, and said:

"Men of Thrandheim, I agree that the law demands the woman's death, since she admits that she is the sister of one criminal, and has been the mistress of another. But I tell you that that law is unjust; she says truly that the innocent should not suffer for the guilty. Therefore I repeal that law, and acquit her.

"Now, Thora, it would be best for you to leave this land, since there may be some here who would dare to wreak their anger on you, and your kinsmen, being dead, can not offer you a home. As to righting your wrongs, I promise you that when I take my own vengeance on Haki, he shall know as painful a death as you could wish him."

"Ah, but let me help you take vengeance!" she cried eagerly. "He shall learn what it is to spurn a king's daughter! He must taste the bitter dregs of defeat, even as he has made me taste the dregs of shame!"

The crowd, keyed to the highest pitch of excitement, began to laugh, at first nervously, then with full-throated amusement. Even Harald smiled; but Thora, fierce in her resentment of Haki's treatment of her, burst out impetuously:

"But I can help you! Listen: when you left Westfold, Haki and Gandalf fell upon it, and remained there till a false report that you were coming frightened them away. Haki is determined to slay you; and to that end he has sent embassies to the kings of the South, to Soti, King of Rogaland; to Kiotvi the Wealthy, King of Agdir; to Thorir Long-Chin and Roald of Thelmark. He is urging them to join in a great alliance against you, to cut you off when you march back home, and slay you.

"When you are dead, he hopes to make himself king of all Norway. Now you know his intent, you can thwart it, if you will only strike swiftly, before he suspects your coming. Oh my King, I pray you will kill this murderer before he kills you!"

Her voice rang clear and high; her eyes sparkled with hate.

Harald laid a hand on Kolbeinn's shoulder, and whispered in his ear. Kolbeinn nodded, stepped forward, and cried aloud:

"Ye have said, my people, that ye would be bound by my word. I believe that what Thora has told us is true; and if true, then it wipes out the offense of her evil blood. Therefore I agree that she should be set free, and should be rewarded for her information concerning the treason of Haki.

"And if the king desires to march against the traitor, I pledge him, in your name, that you will flock to his banner so thick that he will be hard put to it to find enough who are willing to stay home and look after the standing grain and the cattle. You will be compelled, Harald, to hold men from your ranks by force, and to command unwilling hands to lay down the spear. Two days after the summons has gone forth, twenty thousand men will flock to your banner. Have I spoken well, lads?"

"Aye, Aye!" they roared. Where Harald goes, we follow!"

Harald caught Kolbeinn by the hand, his face radiant.

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"By Odin!" he cried, "never was king so well served! I needed but this to decide me; before Haki and his accomplices dream their plans are known, we will fall upon them! But we shall not go overland; I will smite them in the way they least expect. We will go by sea, in the fine new galleys which skilled shipwrights have built me, and strike them like the hammer of Thor!

"First of all I will swoop down upon Eysteinn of Hordaland, for I have sworn to hang him on the highest gallows in Norway, in punishment for the murder of Erik, my father's friend. We sail as soon as my new ship, the *Midgard Serpent*, is finished.

"But I do not need twenty thousand men: eight thousand will be more than enough. Fifty ships go with me. All who remain behind shall obey Hakon of Yrjar, whom I leave here to rule in my stead. Kolbeinn goes with me as captain of my own galley, and bearer of my standard, for he can keep it safe from capture or dishonor. Now, men, will you serve Hakon as truly as you serve me?'

With one voice, they promised loud and cheerful obedience. Well pleased, the king gave orders to Halvard for the numbering-off of those selected for the expedition. Again and again the people cheered him, and the distant hills threw back the multitudinous echo of their enthusiasm.

As Harald turned away, Thora fell on her knees before him.

"My King," she begged, "let me go with you! I can not stay in this land, for I have no home now, and no friends—no one to take me in. Nor can I go back to Haki if I would. Let me enter your service, if it be only as one of the maids that keep your hall swept and adorned. Take me with you, lest I perish for want of food and shelter!"

Harald looked gently upon her.

"You have served me well," he said, "and I would gladly show you my gratitude; but a ship of war is an ill place for a woman, where honor is not always shown to her."

She gazed up at him with a strange new light in her eyes.

"Where Harald is, there is honor," she answered.

"Well," he assented, "so be it. You are not known in Westfold, and may start a new life there. I will find a place for you either in my household, or with kindly people."

FOR the next six days, as they had ever since Harald had come to Thrandheim, the shipyards of Ladir clattered and clanked and swarmed like a vast hive of mechanical bees. Throughout the daylight hours Harald walked the wide, gently-sloping beach, where the master-wrights, long months before, had laid the keels. Now, from those keels had grown stout ribs of selected fir; and along the ribs fifteen-inch planks of prime oak had been bended and made fast with iron rivets and clinch-nails.

Under the personal supervision of the king, shifts of skilled workmen had worked fast and steadily. Propped on their own keels with stanch timbers, swift, slender scout-ships, long and sinuous dragons, and tub-like cargo-boats had been built, pitched, and tarred; removable deck-planks had been laid between the thwarts, the masts had been stepped, and even the grotesquely carven figure-heads had been fitted to the stems.

From end to end of the beach the war-ships lay facing the sea, gazing out over the blue fjord with the painted eyes of fabulous monsters, gaudy in their new coats of red and gray and azure. Nearly sixty were ready to be rigged; and farther to the west along the shore the lithe shapes of as many more gleamed white and unpainted in various stages of construction.

About those already finished clustered groups of half-naked, sweating men, grunting in time to the measured chant of the shift-bosses, and heaving all together, while others thrust rollers under lifted stem and stern. This done, the laborers grouped themselves along the gunwales towering ten feet high, and with their shoulders to the wooden flanks, urged the sand-bound keels free and forward toward the gently curling water.

Last of all complete, a blue leviathan of a long-ship rolled majestically down, the props lying about her ancient bed in a welter of sun-bleached, paint-splashed boarding. Full fifteen feet higher than the gunwales amidships, the scaly, curling neck of a monstrous carven serpent arched itself from the bows, on each side of which its wooden body rolled in fold on fold, and culminated in a fearfully distended menace of slavering jaws and flashing fangs. Finished to mast and spar, she lurched to the water's edge, where tackle, sail, and

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thirty-foot oars lay waiting, as they waited also for nine and forty lesser monsters along the sand.

As the salt waves kissed her fore-foot, Harald strolled up to the master-builder. His eyes gleamed at the sight of her; he laid his hand caressingly on her timbers. Half to himself, he exclaimed softly:

"Ah, what a glorious thing you are, my *Midgard Serpent*! With three-score sturdy rowers, three-score gleaming shields along your sides, and a hundred and forty steel-coated warriors aboard, what a sight you will be to the South! The three seas shall foam about your flanks; all the shores of Norway shall fear your fangs; my enemies shall dread the very sound of your name!"

THE morning sun rose dazzling over a crisp, dancing sea. Here and there over the sky little patches of white cloud accentuated the marvelous blue about them, a blue that swept down from the very zenith to lose and merge itself in the blue water. A little way out a splendid fleet rode at anchor: thirty-four dragon-ships, six scout-ships, and ten cargo-boats. There was a light breeze, but not enough for sailing; and rows of white oars flashed from the sides of each vessel.

At dawn the crews had rowed out in the ships' boats, carrying with them load after load of smoked meat and fish, butts of water and of ale, chests of weapons, sail-chests, extra oars and spars, and all the various gear needed for a long voyage. It was now late July; and Harald expected, given fair weather, to be afloat for several weeks.

The beach was black with men; the disciplined house-carles and the picked fighting-men of the land were drawn up at the water's edge, ready to go on board as soon as Harald appeared; and behind them, the hard-bit peasantry of Thrandheim. The fighting complement of each ship stood by itself, mail-clad and full-armed, waiting for the king.

Back of the beach, crowning the low hills which hid the town from the water, thronged those who were left behind: disappointed warriors, men past the age limit; old women, and youths too young for war; maidens, and mothers with children hanging to their skirts. All stood in silence, tearless and unexpressive; for these stolid children of the North were too familiar with parting, even with death in its most sudden and cruel forms, to give open expression to the emotion which stirred them.

Like the flutter of a breeze in leafy tree-tops, a ripple passed through the crowd. Its ranks divided; and through the midst marched a little company to and over the crest. So soon as the light flashing from their mail announced their coming, a mighty shout rang across the water from the ships, and cheer on cheer pealed from the throats of the warriors. His face flushed with pleasure and excitement, Harald strode down the slope, Hakon and Rognvald on his right hand; on his left, Guthorm and Thora. Behind them marched Hakon's house-carles.

Stopping at the edge of the sand, Harald took Hakon's hand in his.

"To you, Hakon," he said gravely, "I leave my land; hold it well. Rognvald, you are responsible to me for the Meres. The people will obey you as they would obey me. Now farewell, and do not forget my commands."

The two chiefs bowed gravely, and with assurances of loyalty bade him farewell. A boat was pushed off from the side of the *Midgard Serpent* and rowed toward them with smooth, strong strokes. As it grated against the sand, Harald waded out to it and climbed over the gunwale. Guthorm followed him, and lifting Thora aboard, thrust off with a push of his sinewy leg against the beach. As they moved toward the flagship, a flotilla of ships' boats put off from the fleet to fetch the host that waited on the shore.

Soon all were aboard; and now from the mast of the *Midgard Serpent* broke out the blue and gold pennant of Harald. In a moment the fleet was gay with flashing colors. The sun caught up the reflection of a thousand gleaming sheets of metal, as the seamen hung their round shields over the gunwales; the long white oars poised; the anchors were weighed; at the blast of Harald's war-horn the blades dipped, and the mighty fleet bounded over the water toward the open sea.

CHAPTER XV

THE KING'S VENGEANCE

"ONLY a fool seeks wisdom at the bottom of an ale-cup. Take your mouth from that tankard, Eysteinn!"

The tyrant of Hordaland stared at his

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captain of house-carles in sheer amazement, dumfounded at the man's insolence. Slowly the flush of anger rose in his white face, driving away the sodden terror that had possessed it before.

"Helsing!" he blustered, "I have sent men to bloody death for less than that!"

"Who should know it better than I, who have often been your executioner? But you will not slay me, for you need my sword. I tell you, you have sat here like a fool drowning your fear in drink, when you should have been collecting a host and making preparations swiftly and coolly against the danger that threatens."

Eysteinn, his moral fiber rotted with liquor, burst into impotent self-excuse.

"Have I not done all I could?" he protested. "Has not every port, every strip of beach, been guarded ever since Solvi's man brought word that Harald was coming against me with many ships? Have I not loaded my house-carles with gold? You, Helsing, I have heaped with presents; yet you revile me!"

"I do not revile you; I but seek to give you good counsel. Your handful of house-carles will not stand half an hour against Harald's host. Solvi said there were fifty ships in the fleet, did he not? And that Harald's ships were larger than any that have been seen in Norway before? There will be eight thousand men at least, and you have a scant thousand. You may be thankful that I, at least, am faithful and fearless enough to tell you the truth. These other beer-swillers—" he cast a scornful glance at the ten officers of the household that sat at table with him—"are good for nothing but tankard-tipping. Their brains are in their bellies."

A growl rose from the angered bullies; but Helsing turned on them with flashing eyes, and they kept silent.

"But what shall I do?"

Eysteinn spread out his hands in a gesture of helpless despair.

"Arm the peasants! Solvi's messenger, coming overland, made the trip faster than Harald's ships can, delayed as they must have been by contrary winds. We should have at least three days yet. Send your warriors up and down the land; give to each captain plenty of gold to hire men. The peasants are poor—as we should know who have made them poor—some of them are starving, and will welcome the chance to make a few shillings. Those who are too sullen to be bought can be threatened. What with money and force, we can raise ten thousand men before Harald's fleet lands at Biorgvin."

Eysteinn buried his face in his hands.

"Spare your words!" he groaned. "The peasants will come, but they will fight against us, not for us. You know how the Thrandheimers turned on their kings as soon as Harald appeared. The people here hate me worse than the Thrandheimers ever hated their lords, and would wait only till battle was joined to stain their swords in our blood. Better to die on Harald's spears than be torn to pieces by the dogs of Hordaland."

"They hate you no worse than they hate me," Helsing rejoined. "They do not call me Helsing the Hell-Wolf for nothing. My sword is blunted with their flesh; I have filled your coffers with silver torn from their grimy hands. When I scour the country with my carles, men burn their crops and hurl their cattle over the cliffs rather than give them up to me; they hide their women and children in the mountains, and lurk in the bracken for a chance to send an arrow through my ribs.

"Nevertheless, they are our only hope. True, we can not trust them; but we can use them to feed Harald's spears. Give me power to arm and train them; let me lure them with gold and promises. When Harald comes, we will put them where danger is greatest, and station the house-carles among them. Then they will have to fight for us, for they will know that at the first sign of treachery our points will drill their hides."

Eysteinn shook his head; and the ten drunken, frightened officers shook theirs in solemn harmony. Helsing surveyed them in disgust.

"You cowards!" he stormed. "For fifteen years you have ruled these peasants with terror, and now you fear them! They might face us in plain battle, if they outnumbered us sufficiently; but with our weapons at their backs they would no more dare rebel than they would attack the fiends of Surt! Refuse if you can. You know as well as I that there is no other way; it is death fighting ten times our weight of Thrandheimers, or a chance at victory over the corpses of the peasants. For my part, all the gold in your coffers will not hire me to stand by you, Eysteinn, unless you consent."

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This brought the king to his feet.

"But Helsing!" he gasped, "I have made you rich! Will you desert me now?"

"Aye, unless you agree to my plan."

His eyes glazed, his jaw drooping slackly, Eysteinn was an image of terror. Gradually, however, he realized that this daring scheme was the only hope for victory and continued power.

"So be it then," he agreed. "Here is the key to my hoard."

And struggling against his reluctance, he led the way to the royal treasure-chamber.

FROM the narrow eastern end of the peninsula to its wide, mushroomed western beach, the sea-girt capital of Hordaland was alive with armed men. In the three days allowed him, Helsing had raised thousands of hardy peasants, armed them, and divided them into companies. Each company was held in subjection by a hundred house-carles, whom the country-folk feared with a terrible fear.

Used as they were to warfare, the peasants made a formidable army; but the sullen glances they cast at their cruel masters showed how fierce a resentment burned in their hearts. Neither by day, when they drilled on the plain about the king's garth, nor by night, as they lay encamped along the shore, did the house-carles relax their vigilance; and thus the masters of the land preserved their mastery and their lives.

There had been turbulent and bloody scenes. A score of times, some sturdy farmer turned on his officer, and paid the penalty with his life. Once all the men of a village suddenly rushed the guard with drawn swords, cutting and tearing like wild beasts; but this occurred no more, for the rebels were dead, and their wives and children had been hanged in retaliation.

A daring handful that attempted to escape from the camp under cover of night was captured by the guards, tortured, and impaled on sharpened stakes. Now the men were outwardly docile; but hell smoldered in their hearts.

The headlands overlooking the sheltered waters of the fjord were held by men whom Eysteinn could trust. Not a fishing-boat could sail up one of the numberless channels of the little archipelago without being seen by watchful eyes. One danger there was; the islands that reared their rocky heads between the peninsula and the sea were high enough to conceal the approach of even a considerable fleet until its foremost ships should sail into one of the landward channels. Still, the watchers by the shore could easily reach the army with tidings of invasion before the enemy could land.

But Eysteinn was overlooking no chances. Every farm in Hordaland had been stripped of its horses, the best being reserved for the king's use. Eysteinn had packed up his movable wealth—spiral arm-bands of gold, flagons bound with gold and silver, caskets of precious stones and Northern amber—and loaded it into chests and saddle-bags against the possibility of defeat.

Saddled horses waited night and day to bear him swiftly into flight. The royal hall was stripped of its precious tapestries and costly hangings. When Harald came, loaded beasts of burden would stand waiting by the hall-door; if Harald won, the king, together with such of his house-carles as could escape, would mount and ride for their lives.

WEST HORDALAND juts out into the sea like the broad face of a war-ax; and ax-like tapers to a narrow neck where it joins the mainland. All along its deep-indented seaward edge rise round-topped hills, which overlook the nearer of the many winding channels running between mountainous islands.

To the north lies the splendid harbor of Biorgvin, connected by a good road with Alrekstad, Eysteinn's capital; south of Biorgvin three small fjords, each longer and deeper than the last, and each hidden by the isles from the others, constitute a standing menace to the safety of the land. The extreme southern shore of the peninsula, where the ax-shaped land narrows, is quite out of sight from Alrekstad.

Ceaselessly vigilant, Eysteinn's coast-guards watched from the headlands, armed and mounted on the swiftest horses, and stimulated to utmost zeal by promises of huge rewards for reporting the first sign of an enemy.

On the morning of the third day after Solvi's tidings, the guard scanned the sea with anxious excitement. Even allowing for contrary winds, Harald was long overdue, the weather being too fine for storm or shipwreck to have delayed him. His

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ships would approach from the north, and therefore would be visible when they rounded the end of a long island that almost closed the northern end of the nearest channel. It was vital, therefore, that their first appearance be seen and reported without delay.

As his eyes searched that channel, something flashed into the officer's vision from the west, dazzling him. He turned toward the gleam, shading his eyes with his hand. Not a mile away, shooting out from behind Hakon's Crag, a wide-beamed warship raced for the shore, urged by flashing oars that rose and fell swiftly. The morning light, reflected from the metal bosses of the shields on her gunwales, quivered and glittered.

She came on like a ravening monster, with great serpent-jaws rearing above her prow as if about to strike. Even while the captain looked, a second long-ship swept into sight, her port oars lashing the water white as her prow swung 'round toward Hordaland. A third followed, a fourth, a fifth; galley followed galley till a full score raced menacingly onward.

Twenty ships. The captain frowned, turned his horse's head downhill; looked back in perplexity, and finally decided to wait. Harald's fleet, he had been told, numbered fifty ships; here were less than half that number. Not even Harald would dare attack so large a land with only twenty galleys, unless he came by night, when there would be some chance for a surprise attack. Might it not perhaps be Solvi Klofi, come with what ships he could scrape together to re-enforce Eysteinn?

But now, the last of the long procession of ships being well in sight, the first was within a hundred yards of the beach. He looked down upon her, noting her incredible size, her thirty rowing-benches, her wide rooms swarming with armed and armored warriors. Gods! What a galley! Never before had the eyes of man seen such a ship!

With a hissing, boiling smother of foam, she slowed, rocked, and came to a stop, her crew backing water just in time to keep her from stranding. Like ravens swooping down on carrion, her consorts swept up behind, slowed, and came alongside her to the shallower water. One after another, twenty anchors splashed over the bows; and in the puzzled officer's very eyes there rose to the masthead, slow and threatening, the red shield which proclaims war!

The captain gasped, turned his horse's head again, and with a shouted order to his men, raced down the hill toward the capital. Not a moment too soon; before he could interpose the protection of the hill before himself and that monstrous dragon-ship, there came a twanging hum, a strident hiss, and an arrow tore through the crest of his helmet.

Jammed together behind him in the steep, rock-bound road, his ten men offered a better target. With a sharp scream of agony, a horse went down, rolling and blowing red bubbles from its nostrils. The rearmost man threw up his hands and pitched headlong. Then the horsemen got themselves straightened out and rode for it, just as a cloud of arrows sang savagely above their heads.

Standing on the fore-deck of the *Midgard Serpent*, Harald gazed into the sunlight on the edge of the hill, and saw the figures of the coast-guard sink from sight.

"Enough!" he cried, and signaled for the shooting to cease.

Kolbeinn the Bear made his way forward along the deck-planks.

"Out boats!" the king commanded him.

Kolbeinn bellowed the order to the crew; it was passed down the line from ship to ship; and with swift, silent precision the long-boats were lowered, laden with warriors and weapons, and pushed off. In an incredibly short time twenty-five hundred men were landed and formed into companies.

Kolbeinn, stretching his legs and digging his heels into the sand as if to accustom them to the feel of land once more, turned to Harald with a deep chuckle.

"You frightened me that time," he admitted. "The gods be praised that your eyes are good. If you had given the order to back water an instant later, your fine ship would have smashed to kindling, and the lads in the waist and stern would have found the swimming unpleasant in their armor."

Harald nodded.

"It had to be done," he said. "If we had anchored further out, we should have lost too much time. As it is, those horsemen have been in Alrekstad for a full quarter of an hour, and Eysteinn's host is surely on the march. It is but two miles at the

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most, and I did not care to be attacked till I was ready."

He blew his war-horn, and the army advanced up and over the hill. As they reached the crest, they raised their voices in a deafening shout; for before them, a little more than a mile away, there rose a cloud of dust, shot through with the flash of steel, and vocal with the clank and clash of metal and the tramp of many feet.

Swiftly the chiefs carried out their orders, spreading their men in a double line across the lower slope of the hill, the valley north of it, and another hill on the farther side. The archers in the front line fitted shafts to their long elm bows, and waited.

Harald surveyed the oncoming enemy with dismayed surprise. Watching him closely, Kolbeinn saw the expression of his face, and nodded.

"Aye," he commented, "there are more than enough of them, but I doubt there is no cause to fear. Look! Not one man in ten wears body-armor. That means that the bulk of their host is made up of country-folk. The lads in chain-mail are house-carles; the rest are peasants.

"Now if the dog Eysteinn treats his peasants as our kings treated us, they will not be over-anxious to fight for him. Let me manage this, Harald. Command our bowmen to pick off the house-carles, and leave the peasants alone. I will speak with them."

Gradually the enemy drew into range. In accord with their orders, the bowmen aimed at the armored house-carles, but did not loose. Kolbeinn stepped from the ranks and strode forward, holding up his hand.

"Halt!" he shouted, "unless you would be filled with arrows. Hear the word of Harald the King! His quarrel is not with the folk of Hordaland, but with Eysteinn the tyrant who plunders and murders his people. I am Kolbeinn the Bear; there are few in Norway who have not heard of me, and of the part I played in the overthrow of the Thrandheim tyrants. When Harald marched into the North, our kings forced us to take up the sword in their defense.

"I think you know how we turned on our masters and tore them. Harald has ruled us since then, and a good king he has been to us. There is nothing to withhold you from doing as we did. If you fight us, you will die without ever tasting freedom; if you fight for us, we will help you, and you will be rid of your slavery forever. What do you say? Will you be free men, or Eysteinn's dogs?"

The peasants looked stealthily at one another, and askance at the house-carles. Helsing had hit upon the idea of taking them into battle in the same order as that in which they had been trained: with the house-carles interspersed among them, under orders to kill those who rebelled or deserted. And now, as Kolbeinn ceased from speaking, the house-carles scowled savagely at them, growling threats, and brandishing their weapons.

It was too much for the peasants; they stood there like cattle, not daring to strike for their own cause, but each looking at his neighbor as if dumbly urging him to do something, and trembling as they caught the fierce gaze of their oppressors.

At last Helsing, afraid to delay matters longer, gave the order to attack. The poor country-folk were urged forward by sheer dread; if one hung back, the prod of a sharp point impelled him forward. They had scarcely gone ten paces, when—

"LOOSE!" cried the captains; and a storm of arrows beat upon the Hordaland ranks.

The peasants recoiled before it; not one of them had faced an embattled foe for the fifteen years of Eysteinn's reign. Again it came, that terrific blast of steel points, and the great host of Hordaland halted in its tracks. Untrained as they were, they did not know how to face that rain of death; yet they feared to flee, lest the house-carles should cut them down.

They gazed about them piteously, like men that look for death and fear to find it. Then, slowly, surely, the light of understanding dawned in their faces. Harald's men were not shooting at them; but at the house-carles! And the house-carles were dying by the score, by the hundred! So sure was the bowmen's archery at that close range that hardly an arrow missed its mark. Not a peasant was so much as wounded!

Helsing raged up and down the ranks, smiting at the unwilling countrymen with the flat of his sword. But their masters were falling, and fear of those masters was dropping from them. Suddenly, as Helsing

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brought his blade down—the edge this time—an arrow pierced his right shoulder, and the sword dropped from his hand. The man he had struck, bleeding from a terrible wound in the head, rushed at him and drove a broad knife into his breast. Then he leaped up, crying in a voice that bubbled in his throat:

"Helsing is slain! The Hell-Wolf is no more!"

He fell dead over his murderer's corpse.

With an instantaneous, common thought, the peasants sprang like ravening beasts upon the scattered house-carles. Swords and axes fell with savage fury; men tore and bit and strangled in the heaped-up frenzy of unspeakable years. It was not a fight; it was a massacre.

Down rolled the hosts of Harald; not to kill, for there was little killing left to be done, but to rescue. Hardened as they were to slaughter, they were sick at the things that were being done, however well the house-carles had deserved their fate. With weapons cast aside, the king's host charged the confusion with their shields, thrusting the mob to right and left, saving what they could.

Scarce a hundred house-carles won free of the peasants' hands; and more than half of these were taken by the Thrandheimers. The rest, bruised and beaten, winged with panic terror, fled frantically toward Alrekstad.

But it did not suit Harald that they should escape to warn Eysteinn. Hotly the men-at-arms and the peasants took up the pursuit. Unhampered by armor, the peasants drew ahead of the warriors, and rapidly overtook the fugitives. One after another, more or less badly wounded, fell into their hands. Less than a score of harried house-carles dashed panting into the town.

Eysteinn sat on a swift gray stallion, at the head of a little cavalcade of his courtiers, his women, and his treasure. From time to time the sound of shouting reached his ears; at length a terrific roaring drowned out the noise of combat, and then came the confused voices of a multitude, louder and louder, nearer and nearer. Ever closer, ever more terrible; he read it aright at last, and knew his host was in flight.

"Ride!" he shouted; and on the instant a ragged, bleeding house-carle burst through the cluster of houses west of the gate, and fell senseless beside the king's stallion.

On his heels came a second, gasping:

"Flee! Flee! They are upon us!"

Eysteinn, pallid with fright, brought h quirt down, and the frightened gra bounded forward. The entire cavalcad stampeded after, riding hard for the eas and the protection of the forests.

Through the spaces between the house erupted a mass of peasants, brandishing bloody knives and yelling furiously. All their rage revived at the sight of the man who had caused their years of suffering, their bitter, cruel wrongs. They ran after him till they dropped of sheer exhaustion, then lay cursing him with breathless voices.

But if they lost him, they overtook the heavily-laden beasts of burden. They tore open the rich bales of tapestries, broke chests and boxes, and scattered gold, silver, and jewels on the ground. When Harald came up, he found some fighting fiercely over the loot, others, whose wrongs had robbed them of all emotions except desire for vengeance, stamping dainty fabrics and beautifully-wrought golden chalices under their rough-shod feet.

"Where is Eysteinn?" he demanded, as soon as order was restored.

Some pointed in one direction, some in another; but a thick-set man of middle age, with a hard face and eyes that glowed with hate, pointed eastward.

"He fled that way, my lord. He was mounted and we could not catch him."

Harald laughed.

"It is well; he will not ride far," he said.

The fellow stared at him.

"It will be a bad day's work if Eysteinn has escaped," he muttered.

"I tell you he will not escape. Who is there among you who would like to build him a gallows? I mean to have him hanged."

"I!" Every man answered, so that the sound was like a clap of thunder.

They crowded 'round the king, each begging for the task. The fellow who had pointed out the direction of Eysteinn's flight fell to his knees at Harald's feet, and looked up at him with eyes that burned.

Harald stooped and laid his hand on the man's head.

"What has he done to you?" he asked.

"He sent his house-carles to demand my harvest. If I had given it to him, my wife and children would have starved, so

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fused. They bound me, slew my chil-n—all five—before my eyes, and carried wife away. Since then, I have not n her."

His dry-eyed anguish was too much for rald to bear.

"Then you shall build his gallows," he plied. "Such help as you need, your untrymen will be glad to furnish you. omorrow I will have Eysteinn's treasure alued, and will divide it among the heads families, that it may go back to those om whom it was wrongfully extorted."

He checked their applause, and motioned or silence.

"I came here to take vengeance and epay a debt. Your rightful king, Erik, vas murdered by the traitor Eysteinn. Erik was my father's friend, and this day will exact vengeance for his murder. Erik left a daughter and a young son, both of whom have been fostered by Sigurd Stag in Ringariki. The daughter is the elder; and when I have won back my own land of Westfold, I shall send for her to reign over you, mercifully and justly, as did her father before her."

So joy came at last to a people that had long been joyless. With one accord, they fell at Harald's feet, the tears running down their cheeks, and prayed the gods to bless him. Gladly they swore to obey in all things the queen that he should give them, praising him for restoring to them the daughter of Erik the Good.

Harald called to him the man who was to build the gallows.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Grettir, my lord."

"Then, Grettir, you shall help me to fulfil my vow. I have sworn to hang Eysteinn on the highest gallows in Norway. Look to it that my word is made good."

"I will!"

KOLBEINN, stationed a mile down the eastern road, saw a host approaching. It was Guthorm, whom Harald had sent with the rest of the fleet by the outer fjord. Invisible from the shore, the squadron had made its way south to the inlet below Biorgvin and Alrekstad, and landed its men to march up the only road by which Eysteinn could escape.

Guthorm rode in advance, mounted on a fine gray stallion, and leading a footsore, bedraggled, and bound figure by a long rope fastened to his wrist. Kolbeinn held his nose.

"Faugh! Where did you find him, that he stinks so?" he asked.

"Five miles southeast of here, hiding in a swine pen, under a pile of filth. We should have missed him but for his horse, which was looking over the boards of the sty and whinnying. He does smell vilely, but he will not mind that in an hour or so."

Nor did he. They marched him into the town, where the people thronged about him, cursing, jeering, casting stones until Guthorm bade them cease, for they did not always throw straight. To the shore they dragged him, to the top of the highest hill, where Grettir and his companions had made a mighty gallows out of a gigantic pine. There, while the people whom he had misgoverned prayed for the deep damnation of his soul, they hanged him high.

And thus the oath of Harald was fulfilled.

CHAPTER XVI

HARALD COMES HOME

THE day after Eysteinn's execution Harald departed eastward. Numdale, which stretched for one hundred and eighty miles between Alrekstad and Westfold, did not yet recognize his rule; and he intended to march through it by easy stages, compelling its multitude of chiefs and earls to recognize his authority or leave the land. That would still leave the coast districts of Rogaland, Agdir, and Thelmark unconquered; wherefore the king sent Guthorm, with the entire fleet and four thousand men by water to Westfold, a distance of three hundred and seventy miles, with orders to land at every one of the principal harbors and harry the country for two days' march inland.

If possible, Guthorm was to force decisive battles with the kings of these districts, with whom Haki had been conspiring. Thora, for whom the long march through Numdale would have been too severe, was to go with the fleet. The reluctant Kolbeinn had been left behind to protect the countryfolk from the attacks of pirates and wandering adventurers.

During the weeks of the long voyage

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from Thrandheim, Thora had sought Harald's company constantly. Had he wished to avoid her, he could not have done so; for the undecked galleys of the North offered nothing like complete privacy. But his natural kindness, and his pity for the friendless girl, urged him to look to her comfort and welfare; and as she was clearly anxious to be near him, they were often together. Nevertheless, preoccupied as his mind and heart were, it never occurred to him that Thora found a deep personal happiness in being with him.

Thora, however, did not deceive herself at all concerning her emotions. She had never cared greatly for Haki; she had clung to him, as the helpless do cling to the strong, having no one else; and the instinct of the captured woman made her hold fast to her surest chance of protection, shelter, and comfort.

But the evil nature and the consummate ugliness of the berserk had prevented any real affection for him from touching her heart. When he had turned her away, scornfully and on the most shameful pretext, the breaking of the only tie which bound them left her raging with bitterness and hate.

Harald had saved her from death at the hands of the infuriated Thrandheimers; he had taken pity on her; and knowing her story, had felt no contempt for her. For the first time she found a man who treated her with both kindness and respect; and that man being young, brave, and of splendid appearance, her starved heart instantly responded.

She knew herself that she was in love with him before she left his presence on the day of her trial in Thrandheim; she loved him with a fierce, jealous intensity which sprang from the very roots of her being, and left no room in her heart for any other emotion. And unscrupulous as her pitiful life had made her, she used all her charm and every wile of her cunning brain to draw him to her.

His own love for Gunnhild made Harald blind to her lavish displays of affection, and insensitive to her beauty. Thora saw this, and easily guessed the reason; the close of each unhappy day left her bitterer and bitterer against the woman who occupied his heart, and more and more resolved to defeat this woman. To do her justice, Thora never doubted that if she could persuade Harald to keep her with him in Westfold, she could win his love. She knew the power of her own fascinations, and her skill in using them.

The long march through Numdale was one protracted holiday for the hardened warriors of Westfold, and a great adventure for Harald's Thrandheim levies. The latter were still treated with good-natured patronage by the professional house-carles, who had seen years of active service with Halfdan; but they earned their keep, and vastly enjoyed the fighting and the rich booty, of which there was plenty.

There were battles enough; but resistance never lasted long against the three thousand tough champions of Harald and the splendid brilliancy with which he led them. Everywhere the vanquished fled before him, making for the nearest port, knowing full well that Norway was too small to hold both them and the greatest king the Northland had ever known. Five weeks after he had left Eysteinn's carcass swinging in Alrekstad, Harald passed the elbow of Stifla Sound, and was once more in Westfold.

A lovely land it had been, with its wide green fields and pleasant pastures, its slow, soft-voiced brooks and age-old oaks, its sheltered farmsteads set in thriftily planted acres. All these were there now; the grain, ripening in the Autumn sun, bent with the heavy dignity of the swelling ear; the oaks upreared their tremendous heads beside the quiet water-courses.

But the peaceful farmsteads! Where they had been were the dull black ruins of burned timbers, bleached, fire-eaten bones of cattle, and here and there among them the half-fused remnants of farming tools or the pitiful relics of kitchen and hall. More than once Harald stopped, his face working, muttering curses against the evil heart of Gandalf; and the warriors who called that land home stood about him, shaking with grief and anger.

At every blackened stead some soldier burst into labored sobs, or stood grimly silent, his heart heavy and hot within him.

But ever and again, little shanties of raw pine reared on the ruins told of hope rising to toil once more over the dead hopes of the past. Wretched hovels they were, but they were homes; and the sight of them cheered the men's spirits. Yet, go where they would, let them search with

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eyes that loved and longed, they saw not a human soul. Even the cattle, whose hoof-marks lay fresh and deep in the rich earth, were gone from meadow and byre.

"They have seen us from far off, and feared a foe," Harald commented. "Gandalf has set the brand of fear deep in their hearts."

He sent Thoorhall into the interior with a score house-carles, to reassure the folk and bid them meet their king at Tunsberg.

The host marched into Tunsberg just as dusk turned into night. For miles the winking gleam of a hundred torches had guided them homeward; and now, as they marched between the houses outside the palisade—these houses had been spared by Gandalf to house his warriors—a joyful multitude came surging to meet them, waving torches, clapping hands, and shouting aloud in a boisterous turmoil of joy.

Men, women, little children; old and young, rushed from the houses, from the scattered outbuildings, from the wide-flung gates of the palisade, to bid them welcome. The Westfold warriors, marching at the head of the column, were overwhelmed by the waves of well-known faces and outstretched arms. Women tearfully embraced their husbands and sons; old men shook the sword-calloused palms of their children; little lads and girls clung kissing about their fathers' necks.

And that night there was such a feast in every home—save those that were no more—such a banquet in the king's hall, as had never before been known in Westfold.

THREE weeks went by: three weeks of grim preparation. Swords and axes were ground sharp; coats of mail were cunningly mended with new rings skilfully joined; sacrifices of horse-flesh and the blood of lambs were made on the altars of the gods. All went forward with a steady, unhurried determination, a bitter determination; for men's hearts were hungry to avenge the death and dishonor of dear ones, and the soiling of their land.

Halvard, captain of the archers, went about silent and fierce, the madness in his heart showing bleak and dreadful in his face. There had been no welcoming arms, no warm lips, to greet his home-coming: all had been swept away by the ruthless ferocity of Gandalf.

Then, one crisp day, the white sails of the fleet floated up the blue fjord like a flock of graceful gulls. By ones and twos, by squads and companies, the army hastened to the shore. The horns of the captains blared through the bright day, and the shouts of the officers rang out in sharp commands. At the head of the host rode Harald, glittering in armor, his long yellow hair floating down his wide shoulders.

Swiftly the galleys were run ashore; silently Guthorm listened to the tale of Harald, nodding curtly from time to time. Without a wasted moment, a thousand eager warriors from Harald's host joined their comrades on the dragon-ships, to swell the numbers of the fleet which, without rest or delay, was ordered to sail up the fjord to Oslo, Gandalf's capital. Once more the brave ships, with sails furled now, and impelled by the arms of angry men, tore over the curling waves.

Then Harald, with less than two thousand men, marched rapidly northward, past Ravenness, around the Drafnfjord, and still north and east, all day and well into the night. At length the moon shone down on the doomed town of Oslo not two miles before them. Hemmed in between a ship-army on the south and Harald's landward host to the north, it lay still and fated, unconscious of impending death.

Harald looked at the moon.

"It is near midnight," he said to Halvard. "Guthorm must have beached his ships at Sessby two hours ago. It will take him another hour yet to bring his host overland to the town. We will wait."

Halvard growled in his throat.

The night was cold, but no one heeded it. All eyes were fixed, with a hungry intensity, on the sleeping town below.

Half an hour passed, an hour, and more. The men crouched like wild beasts, muscles tense, weapons clenched in rigid hands. At last, far off, the moon glinted on something bright and moving; a horn rang faint and clear to the south, and the host sprang to its feet.

"Now!" cried Harald, and set his war-horn to his lips.

From two directions the ravening hosts closed swiftly on the city of death.

Like starving wolves they swept down upon Oslo, spreading out as they neared it; and the host of Guthorm, pouring in

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from the south, spread out its crescent wings to join them. Before the rudely awakened inhabitants could sally out of doors, the storm was upon them from all directions. Halvard stopped in mid-stride, struck flint on steel, and caught the flashing sparks in a dry, shredded torch of pine. This he blew into a blaze, swung gently, and hurled into the thatch of the nearest house.

Snatching a second torch from a soldier, he lighted it, and flung the flaming brand after the first. The dry thatch caught with a flare and a crackle, and in an instant the roof was ablaze. One after another, the houses were fired, while the maddened warriors reddened their points in the blood of the panic-stricken, bolting townsfolk. Then on, and still on, they surged toward the royal hall looming high and steep-gabled in the midst of the city.

Smothered with smoke, scorched with fire, the citizens hardly made a stand. Here and there they clustered together like scared cattle, half-clothed, half-armed with whatever they could snatch up. Before they could organize a resistance the red flood was on them, hurling them to bloody death. There was no time to ask for quarter, no will to give it.

A score of warriors flung themselves upon the barred door of the royal hall. It cracked, gave, and burst open. Dazed with drink and terror, choking with smoke, a handful of house-carles clustered about the cowering form of Gandalf. Steel clashed on steel, the sharp edges biting to the bone; and the house-carles melted like snow in fire. An incarnate fiend, with eyes that flashed hate, Halvard swung his ax with desperate fury.

Three men went down in swift succession before his strokes, scarce quivering; and now the guilty king stood alone and helpless before the man he had bereaved. With a cry of savage joy, Halvard seized him about the body, bore him struggling to the blood-stained altar in the center of the hall, and flung him flat upon it, face down.

Then, while the flames licked and crackled about the roof-tree, the avenger plunged his knife into his victim's body, drew it along the ribs and downward, thrust his hand into the spouting wound —and drawing from its torn breast the black heart of Gandalf, lifted it on high, and laughed loud and long. And as he laughed, there came a rending crash, a spout of flame, and the roof fell roaring down on slayer and on slain.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CROWNING OF GUNNHILD

MORNING dawned bleak and desolate on Oslo. Dirty brown smoke hovered over the ashes of the town, and drifted heavily toward the water. The unpaved streets between the rows of cinder-heaps that had been houses were strewn with bodies, in every grotesque attitude of death.

Long ago Gandalf had chosen Oslo for his capital, with an appreciative eye for its advantages as a market-town and naval base. Every year at Midsummer, merchants were wont to gather there from the whole of southern Norway, and even from the east marches of Sweden.

Every Spring, Gandalf unbound his long-ships from their Winter bondage, and sent them out after plunder, or sailed, in the king's absence, to ravage the coast of Westfold across the fjord. Now the merchants would enrich his treasure-house no longer; no more would his warriors harry and slay in the land they dared not occupy.

Yet Oslo had never been a real city. Remote from the richly watered farms of eastern Vingulmark, it never became a center of population. Therefore it had always been a city of men, inhabited solely, except in fair-time, by the court and the king's warriors. So, though few of its people survived the dreadful slaughter of Harald's onslaught, not a woman or child perished in its destruction.

In the first attack, Guthorm had detailed a few hundred men to rush Gandalf's ships, which lay drawn up on the beach west of the royal hall. It was an easy task, for the seamen were camped in tents along the beach, too sure of safety to keep watch. Quickly the tents were surrounded and overwhelmed, and the victors took undisputed possession of the ten galleys which constituted the fleet of Vingulmark.

Accompanied by his uncle and Thorhall, Harald went over the captured ships, noting their seaworthiness, criticizing the

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proportion of beam to keel and the poor arrangement of the fighting-rooms.

"Tubs," he commented. "Slow, heavy, and in bad repair. Who would dream that these kneading-troughs could have been such a vexation to my father? Note this, Guthorm, no man can rule this land successfully, no man can be a great king, unless he commands the seas. My realm shall be founded on my ships.

"I have fifty fine galleys now, not counting these hulks; by Spring, my shipwrights in Ladir will have at least a hundred more ready. Nor will that be enough: I will have a shipyard in every port; the seas shall crawl with my navies.

"These ten galleys are to be yours, Guthorm; I will leave them, with twelve hundred men, in your hands. You shall build a hall and houses for your warriors here at Oslo, and hold Vingulmark and Westfold in my name. I shall sail before long to Thrandheim, rush the building of my fleets, and equip all the men that can be spared from the fields. But now tell me how your raids in the southwest fared; for there has been time for little but fighting since you landed yesterday."

Guthorm looked sour.

"Badly enough," he growled. "I went through the South as a knife goes through cheese, and got as little out of it. Soti, King of Rogaland, did not stay for my coming; when I reached his port of Seal Isles, he had fled away with all his fleet. In Agdir I found King Kiotvi the Wealthy waiting for me with an army, Thorir Long-Chin and Roald of Thelmark having joined him.

"They might have given us a pretty battle, but they fought half-heartedly; and having horses, they got away to their ships with little loss. By the time I had marched back to the shore and launched my own fleet, they were out of sight to the southward. Thor knows where they have gone, but they live to trouble us again."

"That is bad enough," Harald said, "but it was no fault of yours. I wonder if Haki the berserk is among those slain here, or if he too got away."

The answer came soon enough. Down from the burned city came a tall warrior, dragging along a struggling, dirty cattle-herd. With one hand wrapped in the peasant's cape-collar, the warrior thrust him roughly forward, and bade him tell his tale.

"Give me my life, and I will tell," the fellow growled.

Harald nodded.

"We do not want the lives of peasants. Say on."

"Your house-carle asked me concerning Haki. I told him Haki recovered from his wound a month ago, and went to Sweden. He did not care, he said, to bide longer with Gandalf, who was destined to die before long."

"There he was right," Harald interrupted. "But Haki was wounded, you said. How did that happen?"

"I know not. Men say he was stabbed by a woman. His berserks are slain; the fools tried to burn Sigurd Stag in his own hall. They should have known better. Sigurd is immortal, and has the strength of ten men. Solvi Klofi led them, and since then we have heard no more of him either. That was a year ago."

"Solvi is still alive, my friend," Harald said grimly. "We heard in Hordaland that he had gone back North, and warned Eysteinn against us. He shall not live much longer. Here! have a reward for your pains."

He tossed the peasant a bit of silver. The fellow bit it, hid it among his rags, and was off like the wind, without a word of thanks.

The king put a hand on the shoulder of each of his companions.

"So now our work here is done," he said. "Guthorm, I leave you here to hold the Southeast for me. You, Thorhall, get the host together and bid the captains see to the launching of the ships. Then, with twenty men of your own company, set out at once for Ringariki. Invite Sigurd Stag, his foster-daughter, and her brother to feast with me in Tunsberg in three days. If you find Hornklofi there, bid him come too."

Thorhall bowed, and set about his business.

IN THE twenty months that had passed since her farewell to Harald, Gunnhild had learned much. She had won the wisdom that comes with enforced separation from the beloved, the wisdom of the maid who waits and wonders and fears while her lover toils and suffers

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in distant lands too far away for her prayers to help him, too far for her even to guess at the dangers that threaten him.

Therefore, with a new serenity born of waiting and longing, patiently, enduringly, with the strength of love that has stood the test of fear, her beauty had become nobler without losing any of its fierce flame. She had put off her impetuous girlhood and put on a radiant, queenly womanhood that sparkled indeed, but burned with a new, even light.

When she dismounted with Sigurd Stag and the exuberant Hornklofi, at the gate of the palisade at Westfold, Gunnhild was astonished at the ranks of gorgeously armed warriors drawn up in honor of her foster-father and herself. Never had she seen such power and magnificence; Gandalf's house-carles had been a mere handful by comparison. And when the warriors, recognizing Thorhall and their escort, tossed their weapons and roared out a welcome, she realized with a sudden shock of proud surprise how great her lover had become.

And there, on the steps of the majestic hall, stood Harald himself, waiting for them —waiting for her!

Harald indeed, but a new Harald, broader of shoulder, crowned with a glory of golden hair, and altogether more kingly. His face had not lost its boyish keenness, but it had gained in dignity, in power, and in the sternness of one who has commanded men. At sight of them, his eyes shone with eager happiness. He came down the steps to meet them, holding out both hands. And though Sigurd seized one and Hornklofi the other, it was Gunnhild whom his eyes sought—Gunnhild the beautiful, the much beloved.

Now he held out his hands to her; and she, with splendid disregard of the eyes that looked on, bent forward and kissed him on the lips.

They passed into the hall. In spite of the lateness of the season, it was not yet cold, and there was no fire. The beer-thane entered with a massive pitcher of silver and three golden flagons on a carved tray. Taking them from him, Harald poured out the foaming liquor and handed the flagons 'round, first to Gunnhild, then to Sigurd, last to Hornklofi.

"I have drunk," he responded to Sigurd's unspoken question.

When the flagons were empty, he led the way to the guest-room, and waited there with the men while a maid-servant came to take Gunnhild to the bower. So soon as the eyes of the two women met, the maid turned away as if abashed and afraid, and led on without looking around once. When they came to the bower, she slipped away with averted face.

As for Gunnhild, who had recognized Thora at once, a gleam of anger came into her eyes.

"How did that woman get here?" she murmured to herself. "Does Harald know who she is? I wonder what mischief she is plotting behind that child's face of hers?"

With royal courtesy Harald showed his guests the baths, the finely furred garments he had provided for them, the gold-set jewels for their necks. Then, with solicitude, he asked—

"Where is young Gunnarr, your foster-son, Sigurd?"

"The lad broke his ankle trying to ride Gunnhild's horse. He has not whimpered once with the hurt, but he could scarce keep back the tears when I told him he must stay at home with the house-carles. He swore he would mount that horse, broken ankle and all, and ride it hither. He would have done it, too, if I had not forbidden him."

Harald smiled.

"He grows like his sister," he said, and went down to see to the preparations for the feast.

THE great hall was ablaze with pine-torches, the light of which was reflected from cunningly placed steel surfaces of plated shields and burnished coats of mail, and danced on the gleaming gold of the table-service. The carven Odin over the high-seat looked down upon all with eyes that no longer threatened, but seemed to brood graciously.

Standing erect among the benches, the house-carles waited like metal statues. At last the door leading to the living-quarters opened, and Harald came forth, leading Gunnhild by the hand. Sigurd and Hornklofi followed them. The warriors raised their flashing blades, shouting vociferously; the king handed Gunnhild to her chair, bade the other guests be seated, and took his own place. Then, and not till then, the hungry house-carles sat down on the

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benches about the lower tables, and servants brought in food and drink.

First, of course, Harald must tell the long tale of his adventures. Gunnhild would not be put off, and Sigurd also insisted. The old King of Ringariki displayed a preposterous pride in Harald, as if he himself had been responsible for him. The girl feasted her ears upon his story. So Harald told all that had happened in the last two years, but haltingly, as if ashamed, suppressing his own part in it as far as he could, and highly praising the courage and resource of his men.

Especially did Guthorm and Hornklofi come in for compliment; and as for the absent Kolbeinn, his ears must have burned at all the fine things said of him behind his back. Every now and then the king referred to some particular deed of valor done by one of the house-carles; and as he spoke the man's name, his comrades shouted aloud in enthusiastic applause, and drank his health. The table-gear clattered and rang with the tumult of five hundred feasters.

Finally the king told of the winning of Hordaland; he closed his narrative with Eysteinn's death, and drawing from under his mantle a gorgeous circlet of twisted gold set with an Oriental emerald, he turned to Gunnhild on his right, rose, and crowned her with it, hailing her as Queen of Hordaland. Then indeed the applause knew no bounds, and Gunnhild must rise and bow again and again to the cheering warriors.

Then she sat down again.

"And Gandalf?" she asked.

"Dead," Harald answered, "and his city burned. Guthorm governs it for me. Haki has escaped to Sweden, but he will not bide there long in safety. Erik, the Swedish King, was a good friend to my father, and will doubtless be as good a friend to me. I shall send an ambassador to Erik with accusations against Haki, and a demand that he seize the berserk and hand him over to me."

"Speaking of Haki," Gunnhild interposed, with a quiet gleam in her eyes, "I have seen some one in your house, Harald, who is doubtless one of his spies."

Harald flashed a surprised glance at her.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"The woman who received me in the hall," Gunnhild answered. "One of your maids. She is no less than Thora, Haki's abandoned sweetheart. From what I hear, she is a cunning woman, and is probably here for some evil purpose."

Harald laughed.

"There is no harm in her," he said lightly. "She came to me in Thrandheim, after Haki had cast her off. Why, she hates the fellow's very name, and has every cause to feel gratitude toward me. You may feel quite safe about Thora."

"I shall never feel safe about any one who has ever been close to Haki. Besides, she is not the manner of woman who should be in your service; I can not bear to breathe the same air with her. I should always think of the life she has led, and of the wicked deeds in which she may have had a part."

"But she has helped me," Harald protested, "by betraying my enemies into my hands."

"That may be," Gunnhild retorted; "and I think the less of her for it. A woman who will betray one man will betray another. I shall not feel safe for you, until you send her away."

"That is easily accomplished, then. I promised Thora either to give her a place in my household, or to find her a home with good people who would care for her. Since you do not trust her, Gunnhild, I will send her to the house of one of my chieftains tomorrow. But I think little of her power to harm me or any one."

Hidden by the deep shadow outside the flickering torchlight, a slender figure stole noiselessly away from the shelter of the door, and gained the shadow unnoticed; nor was Thora's stealthy foot-fall heard above the clatter of the many knives on many plates. But Harald's chair was near the door, and the din had not been so loud that Thora had not overheard his careless dismissal of her.

She knew now that all her arts had been wasted; that with him, all the love she had lavished on him had gone unperceived, and was as nothing compared with Gunnhild's lightest wish. Jealousy tore at her heart; the very violence of her love, turned stormy and black, boded ill for the man who had befriended and ignored her.

The table being cleared, "Sing, Hornklofi!" the king commanded; and the skald obeyed. In tones that rang like the call of trumpets, he sang the exploits of Harald in the North, the tremendous march

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through Norway, the overthrow of the Thrandheim kings, the winning of the Northland, and the founding of an empire.

Then, changing to a melancholy measure, he sang his own lonely journey back to Westfold; in hidden terms, he chanted the tale of Gandalf's fear, of the entrance into the hall of a fearless rider on a black horse, of the stabbing of Haki, the dash for safety, Gandalf's panic-stricken flight, the raid and defeat of Solvi. But so craftily did he conceal his meaning in the "bound words" of his art, that Harald, still ignorant of the actual happenings, failed to understand. When he had finished, the king turned to him, frowning.

"That is a new song," he said. "Part of it I understand; but what is the rest? What does it mean?"

Hornklofi grinned at this, mightily pleased.

"I warned you," he replied, "that the babblings of unskilled North-Country bards would make you forget all your knowledge of the noble art of skaldship."

Sigurd laughed till his beard wagged.

"Hornklofi will not tell you," he wheezed, "and the girl here is ashamed to, so I must interpret the song myself."

Gunnhild tried to catch his eye, but he would not be headed off.

So he told of Gunnhild's daring exploit, and of Hornklofi's equally daring rescue of her. It was Harald's turn to wonder and admire, while Gunnhild sat flushed and silent. At last:

"I will always be your debtor for that, Hornklofi," he said; and turning to Gunnhild, he exclaimed, "And I presume to make you a queen! You are a queen indeed, and one above the noblest crown on earth!"

"After the trouble you have had to crush the petty kings," she laughed, "are you not afraid that I will rebel?"

"If you did," said Harald, "I should indeed have cause to fear. But you will not rebel, for when I take away your crown, it will be to give you the crown of all Norway in exchange."

She blushed to the eyes, and said no more.

THE moon had risen full and clear, with a brightness that beguiled the eye with the semblance of fallen snow. Harald proposed a walk along the fjord; and the others agreeing, he led them out the seaward door of the hall to the beach below, where the little waves were lapping with the replete contentment of high tide on the sands. It was natural enough that he should find Gunnhild at his side; natural, too, that he should take her arm in his to prevent her from stumbling on the stones. Sigurd and Hornklofi walked behind them, in deference to the king's rank.

It was Harald's wish that Gunnhild should see his fine new ships; perhaps he knew that by moonlight their strong, graceful beauty would be at its best. So on they walked in the rich, mellow light, the plashing water in their ears, happiness in their hearts. Slowly they went, for the night was too lovely for haste; and though they had much to say to each other, they spoke little.

Before them towered, pale and ghostly, the slender masts of the fleet, riding at anchor like great swans. Across the water the softened voices of the anchor-watches drifted toward them. The carved figure-heads swung and bobbed like grotesque monsters under the moon, monsters that lay woodenly imprisoned by day, to come to stirring life at night.

As she saw one splendid vessel after another, and counted their number, Gunnhild's heart swelled with pride in her lover, who had won a mighty kingdom for her, and held it with mighty ships built at his command. But when Harald showed her the dragon-ship which he had planned with such care, the magnificent *Midgard Serpent*, she breathed a gasp of astonished delight, and her fingers tightened on his arm.

Sigurd broke in upon them.

"A fine fleet," he praised, "but small yet, Harald. My ancestor Ragnarr had more than three hundred long-ships, though none of them was so great as your flagship here. You will need more than he, if you expect to keep your kingdom long."

"Aye," Hornklofi forestalled Harald's answer. "But it is time you and I got back to the hall, Sigurd. I promised Thorhall to have you entertain the house-carles, who like to hear brave deeds of old times, such as you tell of your ancestor Ragnarr. You will not disappoint them?"

"Not I," the bluff old fighter answered. "Bring my girl back soon, Harald."

Under the wizardry of the moon the lovers walked on and on, not so much seeing

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its white path on the water and hearing the caressing murmur of the waves as feeling them in their hearts. All the world seemed far behind them, so that each thought only of the other. Now they came to a low, flat rock; and there they sat down, Gunnhild still clinging to Harald's arm.

The chill sea-air soon penetrated through the warmth induced by their walk, and the girl shivered. Harald wrapped his cloak about her, and when he had fastened it, gathered her closer, and kissed her. Nor did she refuse to return his kiss, but clung to him, all the long-restrained desire for him filling her heart and shining in her eyes. He held her close, as if he could never let her go again.

At last, sighing, he released her.

"I have not won you yet, sweetest of women," he said.

"Have you not performed your vow? Is not all Norway yours?"

"Not yet. The mightiest of my enemies still live, having fled in their ships, and are waiting only to gather strength before they fall upon the coast with a great fleet. These men are vikings, as Ragnarr Lodbrok was; they fight like fiends on the sea, however weak they may seem on land. It is possible that they may even defeat and kill me. The country is not safe till they are dead."

"They can never conquer you," she answered proudly, gazing at him with eyes that were big with love and faith.

"Not while I live," he assured her; "but I am not immortal. If I should die——"

She put a hand over his mouth.

"That will never be. You will win, as you have always won. I tell you, my beloved, there is no man in Norway, no, nor in the world, whom the gods will permit to conquer you. You are destined to free the people, and to keep them free and safe. Nor is there any man equal to you."

"There are many better," he answered, with a trace of sadness. "There is Sigurd, and there is Hornklofi. You do not dream what a great heart beats in Hornklofi's breast."

Gunnhild was silent, and he went on:

"You must know what Hornklofi has done for us. He loves you, perhaps with a greater love than I can comprehend."

Once more her fingers stopped his speech, while her other hand felt for his.

"Aye, but it is true. While I stayed in Thrandheim, my mind full with the cares of establishing my rule there, building my fleet, and planning campaigns, he thought of you waiting at home, and would not rest till he had gone to you and assured you that I was safe. And he did this for you and me, though his heart was torn with love of you, and he would have given anything except his honor to win you for himself."

"I guessed something of this," she answered gravely. "He never said a word of his own love; always he spoke of yours, and of your fineness, your courage, your great and merciful deeds. He told me how the people worship you, how willingly men work and die for you. But oh, lover of mine, do you not see that even his great heart would be incapable of such loyalty if you were not greater even than he, great enough to deserve his sacrifice? What you have told me only makes me love and honor you so much the more."

Again he kissed her, and held her tightly to him.

"Yes, you are right," she went on. "You must crush the last enemy of Norway before your vow is fulfilled. We have waited two long years, Harald; it will be hard to wait more. But we must, if we would keep faith with ourselves. And you must make your love for me strengthen your heart and give weight to your arm till there is no man left to dispute your power. When that time comes, you must come to me swiftly."

"By the gods," he swore, "I will!"

LEAVING Gunnhild at the bower-door, Harald turned toward the hall. Before he could enter a hand fell on his arm. The passage was dark, and it was a moment before he could distinguish the figure beside him. It was Thora.

"So you would send me away," she reproached him softly. "You would condemn me on the light word of a woman, and thrust me out of your house! What have I done against you, my King?"

Harald knew not what to say. He could not share Gunnhild's distrust of the girl, but he had given his word to find her a place outside of the palace, and he saw no reason for breaking it.

"Why," he said at length, "you have done nothing, so far as I know. I bear

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you no grudge, child. Nevertheless, it is doubtless best that you be where none can suspect ill of you."

"Then you are determined? You will send me forth unheard?"

"I tell you I know nothing against you, nor need you think it so hard a thing to live with people who will treat you kindly."

Thora's face showed pale against the dark.

"If I have deserved any kindness at your hands," she begged, "let me stay with you, Harald! I have never had kindness from any one but you!"

He was frankly mystified.

"Why, girl," he expostulated, "here is a great to-do about nothing! You will be cared for, and will find others who will be as good masters as I. Why should you care about leaving me?"

"Look at me!" she whispered fiercely. "Am I so ill-favored that my presence should be hateful to you? Am I not yours to do with as you will? Am I not fair?"

Now Harald understood indeed.

"It is indeed time you went away," he answered sternly. "If it grieves you, I am sorry; but you can not remain here longer. It is best for you to go where you may recover from this folly."

She stood silent for a time, staring at him with wide eyes. Then, drawing her cloak about her face, she turned, flung the door wide, and went out. Uncertain what she might do in the stress of her emotion, Harald followed her, saw her walk swiftly through the court to the palisade and disappear between the sentries at the great gate. In a moment she had vanished between the houses that bordered the high-road.

Harald shrugged his shoulders.

"Better so," he said to himself. "If she had stayed, some evil would have brewed in her unhappy heart."

MORNING came, and with it Thorhall, to announce that Harald's orders for Gunnhild's journey to Hordaland had been carried out. An escort of fifty horsemen, with provision-wagons, was waiting at the gate under command of Hornklofi.

"Gunnhild needs your wisdom, Hornklofi," Harald told the bard. "Kolbeinn is guarding Hordaland for her; but, though stronger and braver than most men, he lacks your imagination."

Hornklofi's face grew very serious.

"All that I have and am is hers," he answered. "But what will you do, Harald?"

"I go north again as soon as preparations can be made. I have decided to let no more time slip through my fingers. There will be fighting in the Spring, and I must be ready for it. I need twice as many men, and those men must be trained; besides, I must build more ships."

Regretfully, Hornklofi shook the king's hand.

"I will be ready to start in half an hour," he said.

"Do so. It is still dangerous crossing Thelmark Forest, and I want Gunnhild to reach her new kingdom without mishap. The gods go with you, Hornklofi."

An hour later the Queen of Hordaland set out, looking not at all glad at the prospect of entering upon her new dignities, but rather as if she would have preferred to stay in Westfold. The skald beside her, she rode off amid the cheers of the assembled house-carles, the clashing of weapons, and the waving of banners. As Harald stood by her horse's head, she had stooped and kissed him; and now he stood looking after her, her kiss still warm on his lips, his heart sore with the grief of parting.

In three days the fleet sailed for Thrandheim.

CHAPTER XVIII

THORA STRIKES

ALL THROUGH the night Thora's fury drove her on. Blind with jealous rage, stung with disappointment, she saw only hateful contempt in Gunnhild's interposition in her affairs, and read the worst motives into Harald's refusal to let her stay with him. She had no experience of a sort to sustain her in affliction; her knowledge of men was based on her life with Haki, a life which had been spent in close contact with selfishness and baseness.

Therefore disappointment brought out only the baser side of her own nature, for what she had known of love had not been ennobling. She tortured herself with the thought of Gunnhild rejoicing in her unhappiness, and pictured Harald as laughing at her for an easy-hearted little fool.

Toward dawn she fell asleep in a little

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wood, and waked late in the day, unrefreshed, uncomforted. She rose and staggered on, the mounting bitterness within her lending her strength. She resolved on vengeance, vengeance which should humble Gunnhild's pride in the dust, and bring down Harald to shameful defeat. If she could bring about such a revenge, she thought, peace might come to her again.

There was only one way to compass revenge—through Haki. She shuddered at the thought of throwing herself again upon his tenderness; the very image of him was nauseating. It had been his infamous treatment which had wrought her present grief upon her. But as her liking for him had been a slight thing beside her love for Harald, so now her hate of him was swallowed up in the all-engrossing passion for revenge on those who had caused the torment which now oppressed her.

Haki was Harald's enemy; well then, through him she would bring ruin upon Harald. She seized upon this resolution with the passion of despair, and sustained by its violence, went as straight as her weary feet would carry her toward Borghus. She had heard Harald say the berserk had sought refuge in Sweden, and what place in all Sweden would he seek if not Borghus, his old retreat?

Once out of Westfold, Thora traveled by night, and slept by day wherever she could find a hiding-place, for outside of Harald's own district the roads were not safe for women. After ten nights of racking, exhausting effort, and ten days of huddled, frightened concealment, she limped into the forest-clearing where Haki kept himself close, a mere bay in the woods, in the midst of which a palisaded log hall rose solitary and threatening. This was Borghus, "the place of the stronghold."

In the clearing, a little way outside the palisade, a dozen men were cutting up the carcases of slain deer, their arms red to the elbows. Seeing them, Thora started back, for she realized with a shock that these were strangers; but it came into her mind that Haki's old companions had been slain in Solvi's disastrous raid, and that he must have recruited a new band. She advanced, therefore, and greeted them.

The nearest, a burly, bearded villain with one eye, leaped up and started toward her. Ignoring her greeting, his greedy gaze fixed on the gold chain about her neck, he stretched out his hand to seize it. She put his hand aside, demanding bruskly:

"Where is your master? I have business with him. And keep your hands off me, for he will have your life if you molest me."

The fellow hesitated; then, so steadily confident, so threatening was her glance that he was convinced.

"Come," he growled, and led the way through the gate to the hall. The other warriors, who had watched them closely, burst into a peal of mocking laughter at his discomfiture.

Entering the hall, Thora saw Haki on a bench close to the fire, talking in low, eager tones with a young man in splendid armor. He turned swiftly as the housecarle showed Thora in, and looked her over with his evil little red eyes, then frowned at her escort.

"This woman says she has business with you, Master," the fellow said, appearing ill at ease and afraid.

"It may be," Haki answered. "Leave her here, and get out."

Then, rising, he addressed his companion.

"Erik will calm down quickly enough," he said. "Play upon his fear. Tell him Harald has designs on Gautland and Vermland, and remind him that none who have waited for Harald to come to them have lived long. There is not room in all the North for two kings. Let him think that Harald even now plans his death. Keep me informed of any change in Erik's temper, and it will be worth your while. And now I pray you to excuse me, for I have pressing business."

The young man bowed, smiled meaningly at Thora, and left the hall.

So quickly that she had not time to speak, Haki leaped at Thora, and shook her savagely.

"So you have come back!" he snarled. "Having sold me to my enemies, ruined my hopes, and brought me to ridicule, you dare to seek me out again! You fool! You shall be well paid for it! This knife shall drink your blood! I know how to reward treachery."

He laid one hand upon his knife, still holding her roughly with the other. The fear of death in her heart, she forced a scornful laugh and looking him steadily in the eyes, she said mockingly:

"You like to boast that you are a dangerous man, Haki, and that it is death to

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thwart you. You know now that I am a dangerous woman. You flouted me and turned me off. I paid you for it. Did you think you could play your tricks on me and escape punishment? You will know better another time."

THE berserk stared at her in sheer amazement. That a helpless woman, weak and in his very hand, could laugh at him and taunt him, was more than he could comprehend.

"After all," she gibed, "you can but kill me, and I would thank you for that. Moreover, my death will be followed swiftly by your own. What I know dies with me. You can not buy the secret of safety from my corpse."

He let her go, and stepped back from her, his eyes still riveted on hers.

"Your ill-luck began when you played me false," she went on. "If you deal honestly with me, good luck may return to you. Certainly, if you slay me, you will not live three days more."

"Woman," he exclaimed, in half credulous wonder, "tell what you know, in Odin's name!"

"I will tell nothing," she answered triumphantly, "until you have made a bargain with me. I want no more of your love, for I despise it. But I am as fond of life as you are, and I must have the wherewithal to live. You stole me from my home, and therefore you owe me a home so long as I shall live. Swear to spare my life, and to furnish me with a house, servants, and gold, and I will tell you enough to save you from destruction."

"I swear," he replied, "to do whatever you ask, provided your news is sufficient to save me, which I doubt. If not, you die."

"Listen, then. I have been with Harald, as you seem to know; though I do not understand how you found it out."

"Solvi Klofi told me," Haki interrupted. "He has been in hiding in Thrandheim, and your deeds are common talk there."

"Ten days ago Harald gave a feast in Westfold," Thora went on. "Having reasons of my own, I hid behind the door of the hall, and heard him say that you were in Sweden. He has sent an embassy to King Erik to demand that you be given up to him. A woman travels more slowly than mounted men, and it is likely that Erik has already heard and granted this demand. This very night armed men may fall upon you from the wood, and bear you off in chains to Harald. He has a great host with him. You have doubtless heard how he slew Gandalf, and left Guthorm with an army to occupy Vingulmark."

Indeed, having left Harald's court before the order for the return to Thrandheim had been given, she did not know that the king was not still in Westfold.

At these tidings, Haki's face grew livid, and his hands clenched. Nonetheless, he looked up defiantly.

"How am I to know that you speak the truth?" he asked, his hand seeking his knife-hilt. "Having betrayed me to Harald, why should you now betray him to me?"

"Keep me with you for three days," Thora answered. "If you are still alive free then, slay me for a liar. I hate Harald; do not ask me for my reasons, for they do not concern you."

Haki was convinced. He buried his face in his hands; but in a moment, his fierce spirit reasserting itself, he laughed shortly, and said:

"Then I have indeed played the fool. While Harald was in Thrandheim I have been intriguing with the more reckless spirits of Erik's court. Erik's war-duke died a year ago, and no successor could be found who would satisfy all parties. My ill-fame has done me no harm at the Swedish court, and my valor is known all over the North.

"Many of the nobles, especially the young men, are afraid of Harald's ambition. I have been feeding this fear, setting rumors afloat that Harald meditates the conquest of Sweden, and urging my own claim to the office of war-duke. The younger men are all for war with Harald, and want me for their leader; but Erik, who remembers the old friendship between himself and Harald's father, is striving to keep the peace, and does not trust me.

"Two days ago, hoping to force war, I slew a rich peasant who lives in Gautland, on territory claimed by both Sweden and Norway. This peasant had sworn allegiance to Halfdan, and is therefore a subject of Harald My friends at court are leading an army into Gautland to occupy the disputed land in the name of King Erik.

"Now if Harald had stayed in Thrand-

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heim, Erik would have found himself forced into war; I should have been made war-duke, and Harald would have had his best lands overrun by the hosts of Sweden. But now—when his embassy arrives, Erik will be able to avoid war by giving me up: I shall have to settle for the peasant's death as well as for the murder of Halfdan."

"You can flee while there is time," Thora suggested.

"Flee? That may save my life, but it will not wipe away my grudge against Harald. I have had nothing but blows and exile since I first schemed against him; every trick I have tried has failed. All who might have helped me have fallen. I am helpless now; my back is against the wall."

"You are no worse off than Thorir Long-Chin, or Kiotvi the Wealthy," the girl reminded him. "They were kings; now they are homeless vikings. You are as brave as they. Why not escape at once and take to salt water? You would make a famous viking, Haki."

He looked up at her, his eyes alight.

"By the gods, girl! you have hit it!" he shouted. "Thorir and Kiotvi took their ships to France, sailed up the Seine, and are besieging Paris. I will join them, and stir them up against Harald. They will be thirsting for revenge, and I will show them the way.

"Harald's strength is on the sea. Without his ships, he could not strike swiftly, or concentrate his forces on the right spot at the right time. It is the sudden force, the unexpectedness of his blows that tells. I will raise against him every viking fleet that sails the seas, fall upon him, and crush him just when he thinks himself most secure.

"He does not dream that there are ships enough on the ocean to dispute his power; but I hear that more than seven hundred ships are with Thorir and Kiotvi at Paris. I depart at once, and when I return, his soul shall join his father's!"

Thora's face was alight with a terrible joy.

"Take me with you!" she begged. "Let me have a part in this!"

Instantly Haki's suspicions were roused.

"Not I," he refused. "I do not trust you. No, never tell me you hate Harald, and will be faithful to me. It is easy for a woman to invent lies. I will put you where you can do no harm; four of my men will take you to Hadeland, to my old hall, and will keep you there. If you try any tricks, they will kill you. If you behave yourself, and I succeed, I will remember my promise to you, and keep it honorably."

He went to the door and blew his horn. By twos and threes the house-carles came running up, till sixty men filled the hall.

"Skoal for Paris, lads!" cried Haki. "We start now!"

TO BE CONCLUDED

THE SHIPWRECKED SAILOR

by HARRY KEMP

THERE blossomed into golden day another golden morn.
The shipwrecked sailor woke. He watched again, of hope forlorn,
From his high, purple-misted peak, a rag about his hip:
His only dream, his native land, his only hope, a ship!

The fringe of surf swept in and out along the shell-strewn shore;
Beside the reef strange creatures sailed while rainbows went before,
And, great and wide, the sea rolled far in azure distance dim
And touched the edges of the sky with its blue-washing rim.

But the sailor saw but paven streets in a far, smoky town
Where night and day electric cars went booming up and down:
Each little common thought of men smote through him like a dart,
And memories of a woman winged like white birds through his heart.

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THE PLURAL NUMBER

by Wilbur Hall

Author of "Billy June and Padre Paolo's Revolution," "Billy June and the Sinews of War," etc.

DOS PALMAS sprawls along two sides of the railroad just where the mountains and the desert meet, and into it come strange men, with strange tales to tell. They get out of it, too, with dreams that make their eyes glisten unnaturally, and with hopes that cause their hearts to beat high; and sometimes, not often, but sometimes, their dreams come true and their hopes are fulfilled in that monotony of distance and waste, the Mohave Desert. To strangers these grizzled men of the desert seem heroic, and perhaps they are, for they have a cruel and a remorseless mistress to woo and what she takes from them is much more than what she gives—much more.

Gus Welling and "Denver Ed" Lee are two of the oldest of these fortune hunters, and one of the most human stories Dos Palmas has to tell concerns them.

We used to say in Dos Palmas that if Gus and Denver Ed were to speak of a shirt worn by either of them they would refer to it as "our shirt;" it was Mr. Spargo, the preacher, who claimed that there was no such thing as the first person singular in their vocabularies. And when I said above that this story was meaningful I was thinking of some married people who might take a lesson from these two old desert rats, and learn to use to advantage the plural number.

Denver and Welling had had their ups and downs, but never hit it very big—always living in hopes. It was after the Goldfield rush in 1905 that they did their hardest hiking and took their longest chances, and it was at the end of eighteen months of fruitless pursuits of rumors and bonanza stories that they met Dick Garey, sixty miles from Dos Palmas. They'd known him before, and when they found him petering out with pneumonia they changed their plans, and brought him back in. He was grateful to them and just before he died he called Gus Welling to him and told him of a strike he'd made, on the eastern rim of the Little Amargossa.

Dick was going fast, but he managed to scrawl a rough map; after he died they packed heavy and lit out into the middle of August, with hundred-and-twenty-degree

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days plenty and lots of water-holes dried up from two bad Winters. Packed heavy, they did, and lit out, and Dos Palmas watched them go cynically, because many a tale of ledges and outcropping had come to nothing that year.

On the twentieth day they took on their last water and headed straight for the snag-toothed mountain Dick Garey had told them marked the head of the cañon. They had thirty miles to go after they left the well, and the second night out from it Gus Welling dropped a ten-gallon can of water when he was unpacking and it fell on the only sharp rock there was in the neighborhood and most of the water was streaming out into the dry sand before they could turn the can over and stop it. Denver Lee didn't say a word—just went on gathering brush for a fire and whistling.

Gus tried to laugh it off, but it was serious. One of them should have started back for water the next morning, but they were anxious to get on. They made camp that night at the mouth of what they took to be Garey's cañon and hobbled the bell burro. Then they ate and turned in. In the night the burros nosed over the broken water-can and spilled the rest of it. That was Welling's fault—he'd tended the water the night before. He got up cursing.

Denver Lee, probably because he didn't want to hurt Welling's feelings, paid no attention, but went to stirring up flapjacks and whistling. Welling knew he was in the wrong, but he wouldn't say so. With both of them tired out and one water-can empty the sun came up roaring and gave them the hottest day of the year to aggravate them.

They spent the morning looking for the monuments Dick Garey had marked on his map, but they weren't to be found—not even the one he'd indicated with the letters "b. m."—big monument. The sun broiled them; there wasn't a breath of air. At noon they crawled into the little shade there was behind a ledge of rock and ate a bite and panted. About three they started at it again. By and by Gus said—

"Denver, my guess is that we're in the wrong cañon."

Denver took off his sombrero and wiped his red forehead.

"My guess is that your friend Garey had a sun-stroke and imagined there was a ledge here."

That was too much for Welling's taut nerves.

"My friend?" he snapped.

"He was yourn. You said you'd known him before."

Welling laughed harshly.

"If we'd found his claims he'd be your friend, quick enough! You was as strong for this expedition as I was."

Denver shrugged his shoulders that his shirt was chafing and burning.

"Have it that way if you want to, Gus. But this is your party by rights."

"I suppose you're ready to hit back for Dos Palmas, then?" Welling said, and he said it pretty short.

"No, I'm not quitting. I came out here to find these claims and I'm going to find 'em if I have to locate a water-hole and spend the rest of my life here. You can hike back if you want to."

"Go on and locate a water-hole, why don't you? There's enough water here for me. I think you're feverish, Mr. Lee."

And with that, drawing down strong on the singular number, Gus Welling turns and walks up the cañon. Denver Ed Lee thinks a few minutes and then he catches him up a burro, takes a quart of water and the empty cans, and blows.

He was gone two days and two nights, and I think both of those old-timers were a little lonesome and a good deal sorry during their separation. But, as luck would have it, their re-union was messed. Denver got back with thirty gallons of water on the fourth morning and Gus saw him coming and pulled himself up to go out and meet him. But just about then the packed burro sighted the other two browsing around on a hillside and took it into his fool head to go that way.

Denver yelled and jumped to head him, but he stumbled and fell and the burro went off clattering. All Gus saw of this was Denver sitting down, when the burro ran, and beginning to curse, and he thought his pardner was cursing him and waiting for him to follow the runaway burro. So he sat down too, where he was, and those two old fools sat there, a quarter of a mile apart, coming about as close to hating each other as they'd come in twenty years.

With the heat still straining their overwrought nerves they didn't have much to say to each other while they ate a little lunch, and after noon Gus struck off into

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that hell's oven of a cañon for another look, while Denver Lee took a canteen and walked two miles southeast to the mouth of another draw to run his eye over that. He got back late, whistling, and almost forgetting their quarrel, but Gus Welling, hearing Denver's whistle, suspected that his pardner wanted to pretend he'd made a find, and that put it into Gus's head to sing a little.

It was eight o'clock at night; baking hot and no air moving. The monotony and the quarreling were getting on their minds.

"If you could sing, Gus Welling," Denver said, "it wouldn't make so much difference if you didn't know a tune. Or if you knew a tune it wouldn't make a fellow's head ache to hear you squawking at it. But the way it is——"

"If you don't like my singing any better than I like your whistling you better get out of hearing," Gus interrupted.

"Wishing I'd vamoose, are you?"

"I could spare you, Mr. Lee."

"Oh, so you did find something, eh?"

"I'm not saying what I found. I found it, if there was anything!"

"You're not telling much, then?"

"No more than you are—coming back from prospecting around that other cañon! And if you can be mysterious, so can I."

"You mean about today?"

"I mean about everything, from now on."

"All right, Gus," Denver Lee said.

He got up then and dragged his blankets off a way, laid down and pretended to sleep.

GUS WELLING couldn't seem to sleep, himself, so early in the morning he got to thinking that maybe he'd better have a look at the other cañon, and he pulled on his boots and sneaked away and off. Denver Lee chuckled when he saw his pardner's tracks, but it wasn't a very pleasant sort of chuckle. The truth was that he hadn't found anything in that second cañon, and he'd come back meaning to tell Gus so. But their words had split them farther than ever.

Denver made some coffee—coffee for one—and then he thought he'd take another look at the Dick Garey map, which they'd been sort of neglecting for a while. He found it in Gus Welling's coat pocket, and he took it out and began studying over it. Right then something struck him. He remembered that Garey had mentioned a pile of bleached bones, and Denver struck his knee with his hand.

"Bone mound!" he exclaimed, "bone mound is what those letters stand for. B. M. doesn't mean big monument at all!"

He thought it would be easy now, because he'd seen a scattered heap of cattle bones way up the cañon. He went there at once, and after a little search found the pile and began reconstructing his theory about the claim, using the map. By the time he'd figured out something about where the ledge ought to lie it was growing dark and he had to slide down for camp. He was feeling fine about it, and ready to tell the news when he came in sight. And there was Gus Welling a-storming.

"Where's my map?" he began, cursing.

"Your map?" Denver repeated.

"My map—you heard me the first time! You been going into my pockets, and that lets you out. You're through! Here's where I quit!"

Denver flared up then, wiping the sweat off his face, and easing his collar away from his steaming throat.

"Quit, you poor yellow dog! Why, you quit several days back. Yes, I been going into your pockets—to get the map I've got a half interest in. Who the —— told you you could keep me in or let me out."

Gus Welling put down the side of bacon he had been cutting, and stepped forward, holding his long clasp-knife. He'd forgotten he had it, but it didn't look right. He was screaming mad, and not pretty to watch, I guess.

"Half interest!" he cried. "Half of nothing—that's what you get! Dick Garey gave his claims to me, and you strung along. Don't I know that you been trying to double-cross me for a week! Don't I know! Now you're through, I tell you!"

He was walking forward and Denver Lee looked at him and at the knife he carried and he stooped over quick, grabbed up a boulder, and shot it, and it took Gus Welling between the eyes and down he went. Denver pulled the clasp-knife out of his clenched hand first, and then sat down a piece off and boiled.

By and by he thought Gus moved, so he got up and turned his old pardner over. Welling's nose was bleeding and one eye was swelling shut. A biggish lump was coming on his forehead and he was gray like a very sick man. Denver didn't really feel sorry for what he'd done; he was still

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hot-mad and his nerves were jumpy. But he didn't want Gus to suffer any more'n could be helped, so he got water and washed off the bumped spot and gave him a drink and by and by Gus came to. He stared at Denver a minute before he could recollect what had happened. Then he turned over on his side—his back to his pardner.

"Go to blazes, Denver Lee!" he said.

So that was how far they got with a quarrel after twenty years of smooth sailing and fast friendship: fighting mad and unforgiving mad over nothing; just because their weariness and the heat had changed them and little things had kept happening so they misunderstood each other.

I've seen man and wife so sometimes, as I've said—trying to work up a case they could get by a judge with, and never stopping to think of any of the ways they might use to hike over the rough ground until they should top a rise or hit a water-hole where the going would be smooth again, and room for two side by side on the trail.

For a day and two nights Denver cooked grub for both and slid Gus Welling's to him on a plate about like you'd feed a mad dog chained up to a kennel. Gus ate, all right, but he hadn't a look nor a word for Denver. So Lee spent the time up beyond that bone mound, but there was a hoodoo on him, for he couldn't find anything of Garey's prospect hole. The second morning after the trouble he threw the map down to the ground near Gus.

"There's the map you were yammering about," he said, having just found it in his hip-pocket.

"Through with it, eh?" Gus sneered.

"It ain't any good, 's far as I can see. I forgot I had it."

Gus looked up at him then for the first time and there was hate in his eyes.

"You're a dirty liar!" he said.

Denver Lee's hands clenched and he took a step forward, then he laughed and dropped his fists.

"Better wait till you're standing up to say that," he answered, and walked off.

He took a peek at their water and found it getting low again, what with Gus being pretty feverish and using a good bit. But he said to himself that he'd dragged in all the water he was going to for that camp, so he went walking in the cañon and prayed hell for a breeze or a breath of air, and wished he was back in civilization.

It put him into the sulks, by and by, so he went on up the cañon and sat down under a ghost of a bush and wasted a lot of time hating Gus Welling again. He made up his mind there wasn't anything in Dick Garey's yarn, and that he might as well quit living with a man he couldn't live with. After noon he went down to the camp.

"You said I was through, Welling," he began. "You're right. I'm going back to Dos Palmas or Searchlight. I'll leave two of the burros and all but a gallon of water, if you're figuring to stay."

Gus pulled himself together and sat up.

"You bet your life I'm going to stay," he said. "And when you come back with that outfit you're going in to get to work these claims, you want to come back ready for trouble. I'm going to take 'em over if I have to fight God Almighty for 'em. You've found the ledge, and I know it. I'm not a fool. But finding them is all the good they'll ever do you. Understand!"

Denver laughed—that hard, mean laugh he'd accumulated in the last few days.

"I understand better'n you do, Gus. You better come back to the railroad."

"Go on in to the recorder's office, you yellow hound," was all Gus answered, so Denver took an animal and a canteen, with grub for three days, and lit out.

He pushed the burro along to the first water-hole in a day and a half, because it was a case of hurry or die, and when he got there he found it dry as the mound of bones in Hell-trap Cañon. Dry it was, and the next one a good night's travel ahead. So he shot the burro and hit the trail. His water gave out the next forenoon and he lost a couple of hours mistaking a butte that he was lining his course by. Still six hours from water he looked across the desert to see a sand-storm blowing up.

"Well, I haven't got anything to will, and I won't need any funeral expenses," he said, stoically, because he knew what that coming blow meant for him.

THE sand-storm was a regular one—not a little short snifter with the wind high and the sand being sucked up, but a low one that raked up every loose atom on the face of the earth and sent it hurtling along the ground as thick as a fog and as cruel as a blizzard and as choking as a poison gas. Denver didn't attempt to cover distance; he just sat down and

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tried to keep breath coming in and going out with some regularity because it was a habit to do that way and because a man in his position can't help wondering how long he can hold Death at arm's length, making faces, and reaching skinny hands toward a fellow's throat to shut off the air.

Toward daylight of the next day, with the sand-storm still shutting the two in—Denver Lee and Death—Denver began to get the worst of it. He pulled his coat over his head after taking a sort of peep out, and bit his lips until the sick-tasting blood came, and tried once more to get his tongue inside his teeth and to wet it a little. He couldn't make it, so he decided to quit trying, and Death chuckled in his ear:

"Let go your coat, Denver. Here, old pard, brace up!" And there was a sort of sob in the skeleton's throat, or so it sounded.

Denver swore feebly and clutched the garment closer. But it was wrenched away, and he didn't seem to mind. Then water moistened his lips. He grabbed with his hands, but they were pushed aside—held down under hard knees.

"Take it easy, Denver; take it easy! Here! A couple of drops at a time."

Those drops trickled by his swollen tongue and seemed to burn as they went, but they were balm to his throat. Pretty soon there was a spoonful poured in, and this didn't burn. After a long time, while Denver fought with all his strength—all his puny, wasted strength, but desperately—to get his hands on the vessel that occasionally touched his lips, he was allowed a full swallow. Then his face was bathed and his tongue roughly washed off and his lips cooled with water, and he opened his eyes.

"How's it going, Denver?" asked Death, looking like Gus Welling for all the world!

Denver grunted and shut his eyes wearily, wishing the dream would end, one way or the other. Dying seemed a peculiar process to him—not what he'd expected. There was too much stage-setting to something he'd always considered a simple ceremony. But the dream didn't end and Denver wriggled his toes and felt his boots against them, so he began to think this wasn't Death at all. When he got that through his head he sat up, stiffly and weakly, and found the sand-storm passing and Gus Welling stooping over a fire of twigs, heating soup in a can.

"I was a —— old fool, Gus," he said thickly. "A —— old fool! Why didn't you let me kick off?"

Gus straightened up suddenly, spilling some of the soup.

"Pretty near left you too long, Denver," he said. "Here, drink this. Good, eh? No, slow at first! Now, that's the ticket."

Denver had the one idea in his mind.

"What did you bother with me for, Gus? It was all my fault. I'd ought to have been put out of my misery."

Gus laughed.

"It was the pair of us," he said. "I still got a headache for my foolishness—was pretty bad last night when I was hunting for your trail on my hands and knees, the sand covering everything, and nothing to go by. It was only luck that I found you."

"It was surely lucky for me, Gus."

There was a pause, while Denver lay back and chewed a piece of leather strap to get the saliva operating a little and to take the creaking out of his jaws and the fever out of his throat.

Finally Gus said:

"I found your monuments up by that pile of bones. Then I found the ledge."

Denver looked up.

"Garey's ledge?" he asked.

"Yep. It wasn't till then that I knew you'd missed it. I was wrong—did you wrong, Denver."

"Oh," Denver said, slowly. "Well, I'm glad you found it. I couldn't seem to have any luck. But I hadn't figured on taking it for myself, if I located it, like you thought I figured."

"I know it—now," Gus said, and choked.

"It's all right—I had a chance at it and lost out. But there's as much gold in the ground as has ever been staked." He spoke lightly. "I'll make my strike yet."

Gus Welling spat.

"What do you mean, you darn old desert rat?"

"I'll go on into Dos Palmas," Denver said, "and I'll send you an outfit. That'll save you time. You can be laying water-trails off and clearing your ground."

"My ground!" Gus Welling blew his nose on his old red bandanna. "You shut your crazy head, Denver Ed Lee—shut it up, or your brains'll spill out of it. I ain't got any ground. We're going on back—us, see!—and prospect *our* ground!" He rose, turning his back. "You can have another drink now, Denver, old pard."

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BOYBOY'S GREAT DISCOVERY

by Samuel Edward Harris

BOYBOY'S life, so far as he could recall, began on a sweltering day when he asked Pa Donkey for a ride on the tail of his dray, and Pa Donkey yelled good-humoredly—

"Hop on, an' come up in front."

Boyboy, though timid usually, warmed impulsively to Pa Donkey. It might have been the funny way Pa Donkey twitched the tip of his long, narrow nose, or the way "laugh" wrinkles puckered up just under his eyes, or the hip-hip-hurrahing way he shouted, "Git up, Ginger!" or all of them combined that won Boyboy's confidence. P[illegible]mind itself was not clear on that point.

He was sure of but one thing: he felt intimately at ease sitting beside Pa Donkey 'way up there on the front part of the dray. And after he had ridden a block or so, he felt puffed-up and mannish too, for theretofore his rides on drays had been confined to their tails.

Pa Donkey, smiling from his lips to his eyebrows, inquired—

"Wot you name, boy?"

"Boyboy."

"Boyboy wot?"

"Jes' Boyboy."

"Humph! Who's your pa?"

"Ain't never had none."

"Who's your ma?"

"Ain't never had none."

Pa Donkey slowly guided a quid of tobacco from his cheek to a point in back of the middle of his mouth, balled it thoughtfully with his tongue and blew the quid into the roadway with a report like that made by a cork expelled from a popgun.

"Where you sleep?"

"Sometimes on the Garrison Beach, an' sometimes 'round McHugh's Corner, an' sometimes up in Billygoat Alley."

"Humph! Where you eat?"

"Sometimes I sells fish, an' sometimes Spanish limes and hog-plums, an' buys wit' wot I makes."

"Nobody never gi'es you nuffin'?"

"I don't want nobody to gi'e me nuffin'."

Pa Donkey disengaged his left leg, which was caught up at the ankle in the fold of his right leg at the knee, let it hang between the shafts, and then twirled his whip in his hand.

Ginger, unaware that Pa Donkey was twirling the whip merely as an aid to definite thinking, started to lope, and Pa Donkey shouted, "Whoa, Ginger!" and Ginger came to a dead stop, and Pa Donkey shouted, "Git up, Ginger!" and Ginger started to lope again, and Pa Donkey, having thought definitely enough to reach a satisfactory decision, stopped twirling the whip, reined

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Ginger in to a walk and sang in a cajoling tone, "There, boy, there! hump it like a bear," all of which amused Boyboy.

"Boyboy, how would you like to live wit' me an' have a reg'lar bed an' git reg'lar grub?"

"Wot you want me do for you?"

"Who, you? Me let a little shaver like you work for me?"

"I kin work, mister."

"S'pose I won't let you work?"

"I'll jes' go to sellin' fish ergain." Boyboy narrowed his eyes and glinted at Pa Donkey. "I ain't no beggar, mister, wot wants sumpin' for nuffin'. I kin work."

The wrinkles under Pa Donkey's eyes ran fitfully into one another. He smiled admiringly with his eyes, while his lips were as immobile as though petrified.

"S'pose I let you go on the dray wit' me? Wot you say to 'at, Boyboy?"

Pa Donkey intoned the latter question as though he had started to sing the chorus of a ditty.

Boyboy said—

"All right, mister."

And Pa Donkey said—

"You kin start in right now, but, looker here, don't call me mister; jes' call me Pa Donkey like ev'rybody else."

Boyboy smiled, fashioning his lips as if he were about to whimper. Life had been so serious a matter to him, requiring a great deal of his time to consider the problem of when and where he would get his next meal, his lips were unused to smiles.

"Pa Donkey! Wot a funny name!"

"I like to be called Pa Donkey 'cause it reminds me of the time when I was a little boy like you, Boyboy. It's great fun to be a boy, though no boy knows it till he ain't a boy no more. You see, my pa bought a donkey, an' I was so proud of him I used to always talk erbout my pa's donkey when I was wit' the boys, an' pretty soon they all calls me Pa Donkey, an' the name stuck.

" 'At was a long, long time ergo, Boyboy, an' the only thing wot makes me sad-like sometimes is when I feels I can't never be a boy ergain. Ef it ain't sinful-like to say so, Boyboy, I'd rather be a boy ergain 'an to go to heaven."

So Boyboy lived with Pa Donkey in a hut near the First Tower, and, when Boyboy realized fully he was sure of three filling meals a day, he changed into a bright-eyed, happy boy. Pa Donkey treated Boyboy kindly always, but when Pa Donkey was drunk, which was often, he was obsessed with the idea that he was a stingy and an unfeeling guardian, that he wasn't doing half enough for Boyboy.

On those occasions, while on his way home in the afternoon, Pa Donkey stopped Ginger in front of ice-cream saloons, ceremoniously conducted Boyboy into them, sat beside him while he ate his fill of cream and then bought candy for him. It wasn't long before Pa Donkey's cronies, whenever they saw Ginger standing in front of an ice-cream saloon, were wont to say—

"Pa Donkey's drunk again."

Pa Donkey, after he adopted Boyboy, never again left his dray standing in front of a barroom. He reasoned that it would be a bad example to Boyboy, to whom Pa Donkey, when he was drunk, delivered lectures on the follies of intemperance. Besides, the drunker Pa Donkey was the more eloquent he was in trying to convince Boyboy that he—Pa Donkey—was sober.

When he wanted a drink of what was locally known as "coffin paint," which cost a nickel a glass, he left his dray in Boyboy's care along the curbing of one of the auction rooms on Front Street, sneaked into an alleyway and entered the side door of a saloon.

While Boyboy was a small boy he viewed Pa Donkey's protestations of soberness as the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, but as he grew bigger and consequently more knowing he smiled genially with his eyes, minus the wrinkles, puckered up like Pa Donkey's, whenever Pa Donkey stutteringly and sputteringly declared:

"Boyboy, Boy—boy, look—er here! I'm jes' as sober, jes' as sober as a' English flunky on duty."

Sometimes when he was very, very drunk he forgot the concluding part of his simile and crooned, over and over again, "Jes' as so—ber, jes' as so—ber, jes' as so—ber," as though they were the tranquilizing words of a lullaby, until the croon died down to a whisper and the whisper to a mere movement of his lips, by which time he was asleep. As to Pa Donkey's lectures on the follies of intemperance, Boyboy reached that point where he good-naturedly derided them, never losing an opportunity to advise Pa Donkey to practise what he preached.

But later on Boyboy stopped smiling with his eyes when Pa Donkey protested his

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soberness, and stopped deriding him good-naturedly when he lectured on the follies of intemperance. Instead, Boyboy sadly entreated Pa Donkey to give up drinking, and Pa Donkey readily promised to give it up, but never kept his promises.

And then Boyboy, in attempts to have Pa Donkey keep his promises, tracked him and clung to him, wheedled him and threatened him, reasoned with him and prayed to him, as a devoted wife or mother might have done. But Pa Donkey, during the busy hours at the auction rooms, succeeded often in sneaking away from Boyboy and getting drinks and pocketpieces.

Pa Donkey, after complaining for several weeks that his stomach had "gone back on" him, said, "Whoa, Ginger!" one afternoon in front of Dr. Watts's office. In the office Dr. Watts said—

"Pa Donkey, you've got cirrhosis of the liver."

"Whot's good for 'at, Doc?"

"Cut out the booze."

But Pa Donkey didn't "cut out the booze." And Pa Donkey died of cirrhosis of the liver.

CHAPTER II

NOT until the day after Pa Donkey's death did Boyboy know that Pa Donkey had had a sister, for Boyboy never had seen her before or had heard Pa Donkey talk about her. She took charge of Pa Donkey's body, took charge of his horse and dray, took charge of his cooking utensils and took charge of everything else in the hut she wanted. So far as Boyboy was concerned, she could have taken charge of the hut also, for he would not have slept in it again for Pa Donkey's big hominy pot filled with gold.

Boyboy didn't attend Pa Donkey's funeral; he quailed at the thought of seeing Pa Donkey put into a hole and covered up. In Boyboy's immature mind, he considered such a procedure impious, brutal. So when Pa Donkey's body was taken through the front doorway of the hut, Boyboy went out through the back doorway, again to face the world alone. He knew he was friendless and was glad of it, for he preferred to live alone in his hallowed memory of Pa Donkey than in companionship with anybody.

As month after month passed, Boyboy's chief desires were to get enough to eat and to be undisturbed in his thoughts about Pa Donkey. He slept on Sweeney's wharf when it was warm and clear and in a heap of sponge clippings under the shed of Munson's sponge-house when it was cold or rainy.

Night after night before he went to sleep, he rehearsed incidents in his and Pa Donkey's lives. Frequently he lapsed into soliloquies in which he and Pa Donkey were supposed to be conversing, using his natural tone to characterize himself and another imitative of Pa Donkey's. At times he burst into laughter, laughing for himself and Pa Donkey in turn.

Those séances became a passion with Boyboy; he looked forward to them with an absorbing yearning. Some afternoons, as he wandered along the bay front, going from wharf to wharf, he gazed into the west, wondering if the sun would ever set.

While brooding thus he looked like an old young man of thirty or forty, but if one saw him out in the bay swimming—saw his lithe, lank form shoot upward from the bow of a dingey, curve gracefully in the air and cut perpendicularly into the sea—if one saw his head bob above the surface, saw him raise himself half out of the water and swim swiftly back to the dingey while he snuffled and laughed and shook back his heavy shock of hair—one would have judged he was thirteen or fourteen.

For a few months after he was left alone, Boyboy peddled fish for a living. Whatever he earned, whether it was twenty or thirty cents or twice those amounts daily, he spent for food. He lived from hand to mouth, from sun to sun; he never arose with a cent in his pocket or went to bed with one there. The trash-pile out on the county road supplied him with all the clothes he wished. Most of his food, classed as "left-over," he bought at Old Bodie's cookshop, and eventually he stopped hawking fish and washed dishes in Old Bodie's for his meals.

Sometimes when his longing for ice-cream or candy made him as restless and fretful as a dope fiend hankering for heroin or morphin, he sculled in a dingey to Curry's ways and dived a dozen crawfish, which he sold to Peter for fifty cents. He didn't like to do that, though, for crawfish invariably stuck into or gashed his hands, in which condition dish-washing was a distressing occupation to him.

As town wags declared Old Bodie didn't speak a dozen words a day, exclusive of "How

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d'y'!" he and Boyboy were cordially taciturn in their relations. If Old Bodie had been the least inquisitive, Boyboy, staring blankly across his shoulder, would have edged to a corner of the kitchen, taken down his diagonal frock-coat, which was a lack-luster green from age and a dozen sizes too large, and sidestepped out of a doorway, never to return to the cookshop again.

During the year or so he washed dishes at Old Bodie's, Boyboy still thought reverently about Pa Donkey. But time had so ameliorated his feelings over his loss of Pa Donkey, he longed and longed for comradeship, for somebody or something to love and be loved by.

Yet, despite his longing, despite his heart-heaviness, he shrank even from conversing with anybody, with one exception. He entertained a constant fear that if his intercourse with his acquaintances extended further than a hasty "'Lo, there!" they would try to pry into his past. Though he himself was ignorant of his past beyond his adoption by Pa Donkey, yet he realized it was unlike that of other boys and consequently was open to suspicion. And his hypersensitive soul sickened at the thought of that suspicion being mentioned.

Solly, who caught crawfish at night in pots and nets, was the only person with whom Boyboy showed any disposition to converse. Probably that was because Solly was laughing his way through life as Pa Donkey had done, though Solly was unlike what Pa Donkey had been in his estimation of "coffin paint," for Solly not only detested that, but its higher-priced affinities also.

CHAPTER III

AS A northerly scud swept upon Boyboy, who was roving about trying to find a bed for the night, he sucked in his breath quaveringly, bowed his head and tugged at his broad-brimmed conch-hat, while the tails of his frock coat flapped about his bare legs like an unruly jib about a bowsprit.

As early as ten o'clock that morning, when the norther broke, with a heavy rain, sending the mercury down to fifty-two degrees above zero, which was cold, almost unbearably cold, for Key West, Boyboy knew he could not sleep on Sweeney's wharf that night. That thought, though, had not worried him; instead, it had suggested another thought which had made his skin glow in anticipation of the velvety warmth of the heap of sponge clippings.

Boyboy had ensconced himself in the clippings and was voicing his contentment in a series of grateful grunts, when he heard a soggy thud, followed by a shower of clippings falling on and about him. Knowing what the thud and falling clippings betokened, for he had heard and felt them on several other occasions, he raised his head quickly and saw Jim Milliken, Munson's watchman, drawing back his massive crabwood stick to strike again at his feet.

Boyboy tried to spring to his feet—one's footing in a sponge heap is as uncertain as it is in a drawn life net—his legs wabbled, his knees knocked together and he pitched head foremost. Then he scrambled and rolled until he reached bare ground.

"Ef I ketch you in here again, you bum, I'll break this over you."

Milliken shook his crabwood threateningly at Boyboy.

Boyboy ran across the sponge yard and turned the corner of a cigar factory. He didn't entertain any ill feeling toward Milliken; in a crude sort of way he appreciated the circumstance that Milliken merely had done one of the things he had been hired to do. Boyboy viewed reverses of that nature solely as a result of bad luck. Besides, his luck might change, for Pa Donkey had said that "bad luck is only good luck gone astray," and another of his maxims had been: "Take things as they come an' take 'em smilin'."

But a comfortable bed on a night so cold and rainy and windy was hard to find. When Boyboy had been engaged in his quest an hour the rain had soaked his coat, his coat had stuck to his gossamer-like jacket and his jacket had stuck to his skin. Every hundred feet or so that he walked he thrust his hands under the shoulders of his coat to shift the tarred twine which he used as suspenders.

Ordinarily, he was not conscious of the twine, other than to give it an additional hitch when he was sculling a dingey or chasing wild steers, but, because of his wandering in the cold and wet, it had made his shoulders as sensitive as though they had been blistered by porous plasters. By that time he had no thoughts for Pa Donkey's homely philosophy. They were concerned solely with finding something about

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five-feet long and two-feet wide, its hardness of no consequence, its being out of the wind and rain of great consequence.

Boyboy, satisfying himself that the two-by-five space he wanted was not to be found in the up-town district, decided to go back down-town. As soon as he had made that decision, he raised his head and looked down the long lane of a street, with its sporadic lamps, dim and lonely and shivering in their rain-dulled globes; with its laurel and tamarind and hog-plum and coconut and fig and sandbox and sapodilla and Spanish lime and banyan shaking and bending and creaking their limbs and branches as though they were demoniacally possessed.

While Boyboy gazed, his eyes seemed eager to bridge the distance ahead of him, and his legs responded to the same feeling which had prompted his eager look. He was walking rapidly when, glancing to his right fifty feet ahead, he espied a barrel, with excelsior bulging out of its top, under the shed of Tarley's store in the lee of the wind and rain.

Instantly Boyboy slackened his pace and assumed an air of unconcern. As he passed the barrel he glanced fleetingly at it from under the brim of his conch-hat. He stopped at the end of the shed, which was at a corner, and took off his hat. Seemingly, he was intent solely in shaking the water off it, but as he swept it from side to side, turning around slowly at the same time, he satisfied himself the streets were deserted.

Standing beside the barrel, Boyboy balled up the front part of his coat at the bottom and held it together tightly with his left hand just above his knees, and with his right hand poked excelsior through the V-shaped neck of the coat until he looked like an overstuffed political effigy of those sulfuric times when it was considered ignominious to be a Democrat in the North and criminal to be a Republican in the South.

Boyboy had determined to do something he had done but a few times before and which he disliked very much to do: sleep under the floor of a store. The thought of rats and fleas made him shudder, but he had to sleep somewhere and where else could he sleep? Probably, though, rats would nestle in their retreats and fleas would dig deep into the dirt on a cold night like that. It was somewhat comforting to think they would, anyhow.

He continued to stuff the coat until he heard the rumbling of wagon wheels, when he stopped abruptly. He feared that somebody who knew him might divine his reason for taking the excelsior, and he didn't want anybody to divine that. It wasn't anybody's business where or how he slept—he didn't begrudge anybody his warm bed—while it was so very much his own business he considered it sacredly personal.

He hurried down the street to Chichi's grocery, a block away, and wriggled under the floor. Then he unbuttoned his coat, spread some of the excelsior on the ground, reserving a large flake for a pillow, took off his coat and tied it to dry between two beams, near where they converged, untied his suspenders, covered himself with excelsior and went to sleep within a few minutes, without having his nightly séance with Pa Donkey.

The next morning Boyboy stretched out his arm, just as the day was breaking, and was giving vent to a prolonged grunt, indicative of agreeable drowsiness, when his fingers touched something furry.

"Ugh! A rat!"

Boyboy opened his eyes, raised his head and drew back his hand to strike, when he saw, cuddled beside him, a scrawny yellow dog that was a cross between a moon-bayer and a kioodle.

"Geemoneyneddy! Ef it ain't a dog! Wot you doin' here, old boy? Was you cold las' night, too?"

Boyboy stroked the dog's head, and the dog worked his snout deeper into the excelsior at Boyboy's side and snuffled contentedly. Boyboy sensed a feeling of friendliness that warmed his blood. It had been a long time since he had had a feeling of that kind.

Boyboy turned on his side, sucked his lips together sympathetically and said, "Here, boy!" and the dog wagged his tail and bellied through the excelsior until his head was beside Boyboy's.

"Who you b'long to?" Boyboy raised himself on his elbow and tried to lift the dog up. "Stan' up, old boy. There! You ain't got no owner, eh?"

Boyboy rubbed his hand over the dog's back and eyed him appraisingly.

"Don't s'pose anybody'd own you but me. How'd you like to b'long to me? I'll git you all the stew you want down at Old Bodie's. Wot you say?"

The dog had been wagging his tail the

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entire time Boyboy had been talking, but apparently he did not notice it until he had asked his last question, for then he exclaimed:

"Ho, ho, old boy, you tellin' me yes wit' your tail! It's a go, eh?"

Boyboy put his arm about the dog's neck and rubbed the back of his hand under the dog's jaw.

"I s'pose a old yallar dog like you, wot ain't got no owner, ain't got no name, neither?"

As the dog still continued to wag his tail, Boyboy decided that the wagging indicated that the dog was nameless.

A mist spread over Boyboy's eyes, and he gulped hard. He removed his arm from about the dog's neck and held it—the arm—to his eyes. He expressed something that sounded like half-stifled sighs sometimes and like half-stifled sobs at other times. Then he sighed deeply and took his arm from his eyes.

"S'pose I call you Pa Donkey, old boy? How'd you like 'at name?"

Even a dog with half an eye might have seen that Boyboy had forced the cheery smiles with which he capped his question.

The dog still wagged his tail.

"All right, you name Pa Donkey. Come on, Pa Donkey, let's git out of here an' git sumpin' to eat."

Boyboy brushed excelsior off himself, untied his coat from between the beams and crawled from under the floor, preceded by Pa Donkey.

The norther had died out during the night, the wind had decreased and had veered to the southeast and the mercury had crept up to seventy-two, with the likelihood of its creeping up six or eight degrees higher by the time the sun reached the zenith. And the day was in January.

Boyboy put on his coat, which was still damp, and started off at a dog-trot, with Pa Donkey jumping up at his legs.

"Come on, Pa Donkey—down to Old Bodie's for some of 'at stew left over from las' night."

CHAPTER IV

EATING bowlsfull of stew and scraps of raw beef three times daily and going in swimming nearly every day with Boyboy, it was not long before Pa Donkey had a sleek coat and rounded sides. Pa Donkey never tired of showing his gratefulness to Boyboy. Sometimes Pa Donkey barked joyfully, sometimes he jumped up on Boyboy, sometimes he licked his hand or foot, sometimes he tugged at the tails of his coat, and all the time his tail seemed to wag automatically, except, of course, when he and Boyboy were bedfellows on Sweeney's wharf or in the heap of sponge clippings. And Boyboy loved Pa Donkey as dearly as Pa Donkey loved Boyboy.

One morning, after he had finished washing the breakfast dishes at Old Bodie's, Boyboy, with Pa Donkey at his heels, was hurrying to John Lowe's wharf to get a dingey to go out in the bay for a swim, when he heard the yelping of dogs and the grinding noise of an automobile as it turned a corner and came to a sudden stop a few feet behind him.

He turned about to see what was the matter, and, as he did so, saw a man, wearing leather gloves which reached nearly up to his elbows, jump from the tail of an automobile wagon. In the same instant Boyboy noticed that the body of the wagon was enclosed in wire, and that in the enclosure were a score of dogs, some snapping, some fighting, some yelping, some whining, some hunched up, shivering from fear.

Before Boyboy realized fully the significance of the wagon's stopping so near to him, the man with the long gloves was swooping down upon Pa Donkey. Pa Donkey, instead of dashing away, stood still, grinned foolishly and wagged his tail.

The man grabbed him and lifted him up, the chauffeur jumped to the ground, ran to the back of the wagon and raised up the tailboard, which swung from hinges at the top of the wagon, and the dog-catcher threw Pa Donkey in among the other dogs. The advent of another member to their company was signalized by the dogs with louder yelping and barking and whining and fiercer growling and snapping and fighting.

The incident wasn't self-explainable to Boyboy. He didn't read the local papers, because he not only didn't know how to read but didn't even know there was any such thing as reading, and consequently he was unaware that Key West was in the throes of a dog scare, the first in more than a decade.

Boyboy, stupefied, stood still until the tailboard of the wagon fell with a bang, after Pa Donkey had been hurtled through the opening. Then Boyboy, as though propelled by a powerful springboard, bounded toward the dog-catcher.

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"Hey, mister, 'at's my dog. Gi'e him to me."

"Beat it!"

"Gi'e him to me, mister; please, please, gi'e him to me."

"Beat it, I say!"

The automobile started off and Boyboy, pleading, ran close behind it.

"Pa Donkey ain't done nuffin', mister; he ain't done nuffin'. He's the mos' kindes', bestes' dog wot ever lived. You kin put your han' in his mouth, an' he won't never bite you. Gi'e him to me, eh, mister?"

When the wagon stopped again, Boyboy asked the dog-catcher what he was going to to with Pa Donkey.

"Kill him, if you don't come across with two beans for a license."

Boyboy rubbed his throat and tried to swallow, as though the dog-catcher had gripped him there instead of having spoken to him.

Kill Pa Donkey! Oh, no, no, no! If they killed Pa Donkey, they'd have to kill Boyboy, too. For how could he live, why would he want to live, without Pa Donkey? Boyboy's lips twitched spasmodically a moment and then he began to sob.

"Wot you goin' to kill him for, mister? He ain't never done nuffin' to nobody. He's the mos' kindes', bestes' dog wot ever lived. Me an' him is jes' the same as we was brothers, an' I love him, an' he loves me jes' the same as we was brothers. Gi'e him to me, eh, mister? Please, eh, mister? Eh, mister? Eh, mister?"

"Beat it! If you want your mutt back, go down to the pound with two beans for a license."

For two hours Boyboy followed the wagon. At the end of that time his hair was as wet as if he had just come out of swimming; dust had turned the lack-luster green of his coat to mouse color; dust had stuck to his face and perspiration had coursed through the dust, so that his cheeks resembled photographs of the canals on Mars; so much dust had gathered and, having been wet with perspiration, had caked between his toes they looked as if he had been walking in mud.

At the pound the warden told Boyboy that Pa Donkey would be chloroformed at sunset if a license for two dollars were not obtained for him.

Boyboy had satisfied himself that it was useless to weep. He was facing a grim reality; it was up to him to do something to save Pa Donkey's life. Boyboy bowed his head and meditated a moment. Ah, he knew how he could earn two dollars!

"Two dollars before sundown, mister? An' you'll wait till the sun is right, right down?"

"Yep! And, say, you better get a dime to buy a muzzle and another dime to buy a collar to put the license on."

"An' two dimes? Oh, it's easy to git nickels an' dimes, mister!"

Boyboy had recalled that the demand for crawfish at the market was greater than the supply, because of their shipment to Havana, Tampa and other points; he had recalled too that Peter had said he would buy all that he—Boyboy—caught for fifty cents a dozen. But how many dozen would it be necessary for him to dive to get for those two dollars and two dimes?

He knew how many crawfish made a dozen—one for each of his fingers and two over. But how many times would he have to count his fingers over to get the number of crawfish he wanted? Perhaps Solly could tell him that. Anyhow, Solly was the only person with whom Boyboy felt he was sufficiently intimate to bother him with so profound a question.

Three Japanese from the mess room of a torpedo-boat destroyer were buying crawfish from Solly when Boyboy arrived at the market. Impatiently Boyboy watched Solly putting crawfish into a sack as he mumblingly counted them. The longer Solly counted the louder he counted, and Boyboy's impatience changed to astonishment, for he heard distinctly:

"Seventy-eight, seventy-nine, eighty, eighty-one, eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four. There! Seven dozen."

My, Solly was a smart man! He could count 'way up to eighty-four and say it was seven dozen just as easy as though he were saying one, two, three!

After Solly had pocketed the money the Japanese had given him, he smiled at Boyboy.

"'Lo, Boyboy! How you? Where's Pa Donkey?"

"All right, Solly; hope you the same. Pa Donkey's—er—er—over to Old Bodie's."

Boyboy put his question abruptly—

"Solly, how many dozen crawfish do it take for two dollars and two dimes?"

"Four dozen for two dollars."

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"How many times is 'at my fingers over?" Boyboy held up his hands.

"Five times over, less two."

"An' ef I got 'em six times over, would 'at be ernough for the two dimes?"

"Sure! Ernough for five dimes. You big ernough to know 'at, Boyboy. Why don't you go to school?"

"Wot for?"

"To learn how to count an' read an' write an' spell,"

"Do they learn how to count in school?"

"Sure!" Solly drawled that word as though it contained a dozen r's. "Wot you think they go there for?"

Boyboy ran his fingers through the side of his hair.

"I thought they go there to keep out the sun an' so's they wouldn't worry their ma's."

Solly chuckled indulgently.

"Boyboy, I didn't think you was such a big dunce. Bet you don't know what c-a-t spells."

Boyboy was disconcerted.

"I don't know what spells is."

"C-a-t. Wot 'at mean?"

" 'Cuse me, Solly, but I gotta go. Kin I come 'roun' tomorrow an' you tell me more erbout countin'?"

"Sure! An' erbout readin' an' writin' an' spellin', too, an' come before twelve, Boyboy, 'cause I have to go home an' git a snooze before goin' out at night."

"All right, Solly; thanks, Solly. 'Member, Solly, the countin', not the spells."

CHAPTER V

IT WAS shortly after noon when Boyboy cast the anchor of a dingey in the bay at Curry's ways. It was a warm, windless day in November; the bay was as still as a lake sheeted with ice, and the water was as clear as if it had been filtered. Boyboy leaned over a side of the dingey and looked at the bottom.

"Geemoneyneddy! She's covered wit' 'em."

The conditions for diving crawfish were ideal. Nearly every time Boyboy shot to the surface he had a crawfish in each hand. And down he dived again, letting his feet slip out from under him and ducking his head below the surface with scarcely a ripple.

Boyboy employed more time in counting the crawfish than in diving them. Time after time he got into the dingey and, using his right hand first as a sort of abacus, moved the crawfish from one pile to another with his left. It didn't occur to him that he could have done the counting with one hand, for when he had bent down the fingers of his right hand he opened it and handled the crawfish with that, using his left hand as an abacus. That was once over; he was sure of that, and he repeated the same formula for each of the other four times, yet, fearful he had made a mistake, he dived several times more.

Now, a dozen and one things, particularly muddy water or the master of the ways, who was cantankerous sometimes, could have prevented Boyboy from getting the crawfish and consequently from saving Pa Donkey's life. Or, Boyboy could have been delayed in a dozen and one ways, particularly by the scarcity of crawfish or the rivalry of other divers, so that he would arrive at the pound and save Pa Donkey just as he was being led into the chloroform room. But none of those things happened.

The sun was two hours high when Boyboy, having caught five dozen and seven crawfish, reached the pound with two dollars and seventy-five cents held tightly in his right hand, despite its many pricks and lacerations. And his left hand was pricked and gashed just as badly, but he wasn't concerned with the condition of his hands; he was wholly occupied with saving Pa Donkey's life.

"YOU got time to tell me erbout the countin' now, Solly?"

"Sure! Come erboard, Boyboy. Pass me Pa Donkey. Um! I see you got him dressed up in style, eh? An' he don't 'pear to like it a bit. An' wot you got your han's tied up for?"

Pa Donkey alternately was cuffing the muzzle with his paw and rubbing it against Boyboy's leg.

"Gotta do 'at so's they won't take him to the poun' an' kill him. See the license on his collar?"

"But your han's, Boyboy?"

"Nuffin' much, Solly. Jes' stuck 'em wit' crawfish."

"Come erboard an' let me put some camphor phenic on 'em. Why didn't you put on gloves?"

Solly, while dressing Boyboy's hands, was the embodiment of compassion, exhaling a

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soothing sound, like the steady escape of steam from a radiator, until glints of red showed in the tan on his face, then, catching his breath, exhaling it again, over and over, until he had tied the last string. Then he said, "There!" tapped Boyboy encouragingly on the shoulder and instantly took on a momentous air, for learning was a momentous thing to Solly.

"Let's see, Boyboy. This your first lesson, an' I'll be easy wit' you. C-a-t? r-a-t? d-o-g?"

"Not the spells, Solly; I don't care erbout 'em; the countin'."

"But, Boyboy, they's the mos' 'portant things. Let me show you. Ef I write c-a-t—" Solly outlined the capitals on the sternsheet—" 'at means cat; ef I write r-a-t, 'at means rat; ef I write d-o-g, 'at means dog."

Boyboy was unimpressed; the ghost of a sneer flitted across his upper lip.

"Well, wot good's 'at? You can't count to eighty-four ef you know 'at."

"I'll show you wot good 'tis—ten times better 'an countin' to eighty-four. S'pose I write c-a-t, r-a-t, d-o-g on a piece of paper an' let you take it to Pete? Pete 'u'd look at it an' say right off, 'cat, rat, dog'."

Boyboy smiled knowingly.

"Go on, Solly, you kiddin' me."

"Kiddin' you? Hush, Boyboy! Don't let nobody hear you say 'at. An' 'at ain't nuffin' to wot I knows. Let me show you wot I could do wit' writin'. S'pose I was up in New York an' I wanted Pete to send me ten dozen crawfish? I'd jes' write P-e-t—Pete; s-e-n—send; m-e—me; t-e-n—ten; d-u-s-n—dozen; c-r-r-f-i-s—crawfish, an' Pete 'u'd git the letter an' send 'em to me."

The longer Solly spoke the wider Boyboy opened his mouth, and when Solly had finished speaking Boyboy closed his mouth as gradually as he had opened it.

"You ain't kiddin' me, Solly, is you? Say, s'elp you God, you ain't kiddin' me."

"S'elp me God, I ain't, Boyboy, an" at ain't nuffin' to wot I knows."

"All them boys learn all 'at in school, an' countin', too?"

"Sure!"

"Did you go to school, Solly?"

"Sure! I went nearly five weeks one time, an' wot I tol' you ain't nuffin' to wot I knows."

Boyboy sighed.

"Pa Donkey never tol' me nuffin' erbout school."

"Pa Donkey! How could he when he never went? He was good an' funny an' all 'at, Boyboy, but he didn't know A from bullfoot."

"An' you think I could learn as much as you, Solly?"

"Sure! P'r'aps you could learn more. You never kin tell erbout learnin', Boyboy, 'cause it's a funny thing. You might learn ernough to be a great lawyer like Charley Malone. Ef I'd 'a' gone to school a year, I might 'a' been better'n Charley Malone, 'cause learnin's one thing you never kin tell erbout, Boyboy. It might make you smart ernough to be a doctor or a lawyer or a preacher or a sheriff or a policeman. 'At's one thing you never kin tell, Boyboy."

"My, I wish I could go to school!"

For Solly to be able to write, "Pet sen me ten dusn crrfis," 'way up in New York, and for Peter to be able to understand it, upon receipt of the letter, 'way down in Key West, was to Boyboy a great discovery. Unlike Archimedes, Boyboy didn't exclaim, "Eureka!" or—what would have been to him its modern equivalent—"Geemoney-neddy!" Instead, Boyboy bowed his head, and Solly, looking compassionately at him, saw a tear drop into the hold of the boat. Solly patted Boyboy's shoulder.

"Don't take on 'ataway, Boyboy. You kin go to school, ef you want to."

"How kin—how kin I?"

Boyboy bowed his head lower.

"I tell you how you kin, Boyboy. S'pose you went crawfishin' wit' me out to the old Pearl an' minded the nets and pots till twelve ev'ry night? Then you could go to sleep till daybreak, when we come in, an' then you could go to my shack and git breakfast wit' Martha, an' dress up an' go to school, an' take lunch wit' you, an' when you come from school you could have another nap, ef you wanted to, an' git up an' git supper at five, an' come down an' go out ergain. Ef you do 'at, I'll gi'e you all your grub an' clothes an' a dollar a week. How's 'at, Boyboy?"

Boyboy raised his head and, looking wistfully at Solly, drew in his breath.

"You mean 'at Solly? An' could we take erlong Pa Donkey wit' us?"

"Sure! When kin you start?"

"Right erway, Solly."

"It's a go then. I'll buy you some clothes an' shoes, so's you kin start in to go to school next Monday."

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THE MAGIC ARROW

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "McLean Mends His Medicine," "In the Shadow of Pontiac," etc.

FLAT on his back in a hollow of the sand-hills Quimby, the hunter, stared through the velvet blackness of the August night at the silent stars. The Milky Way, that dusty track along which buffalo and wild horses once raced across the heavens, suggested the haze in his own mind, scintillations blazing in chaos. Somewhere beyond the North Star the Great White Beaver was gnawing at the post that supports the earth. Sometime the post would snap and the earth would tumble over and complete the destinies of all men. Just how the Beaver would occupy himself after that event had not been prognosticated.

Not that Quimby accepted all these direct conclusions of the Plains Indians—although once, down in the Del Notre country, the ground had quivered and slipped and tilted violently under his feet—but merely conceded there must be some foundation of fact for the redman's beliefs. Details were of no great consequence, anyway. If the gnawing of the Beaver was not the cause of the earth's lurching, then one must look to some other equally stupendous agency.

The Cheyennes said the buffalo and wild horses kicked up the dust of the Milky Way before coming to the Plains. Possibly the Cheyennes were mistaken; yet something had made the celestial trail, and even if horses were introduced by the Spaniards the latter had to obtain them from somewhere. In any event, the conquistadors did not introduce the buffalo. Quimby was Pennsylvania born, but his system of philosophy had been developed among primitive people and was based on their mythology.

Nothing happened unless some one did it. It mattered not whether you were of a Siouan tribe and believed in the mysterious and mighty *Wakanda*, or of the Shoshonean family and paid tribute to *Pokunt*, or saved your homage for the Algonquian *Manito*, or worshiped in the white man's church in seeking the altar of the First Cause. The fact remained a fact that the dust of the Milky Way had not had time to settle, the earth did lurch at times; something with a will to do it had worked each effect.

Quimby registered all these aboriginal influences without attempting to analyze them. He was satisfied to believe this night that the medicine already had been

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prepared to aid or hinder him in his work of finding the missing Baxter boy. He considered himself a medium through which benign medicine would work if not overthrown by the superior power of some evil medicine.

He had set out on his quest firmly believing he was *Wakan*, strong and powerful in achievement. But one who was *Wakan* must move astutely. One must give aid to, as well as receive aid from, spiritual allies. He who proceeded blindly and foolishly was *Heykoa*, mentally unbalanced and doomed to failure.

The Baxter child, aged eight, had vanished from a sixty-wagon caravan camping on the Rawhide near Fort Laramie. He was last seen wandering along the banks of the stream. An exhaustive search of the shallow waters had convinced the caravan people he had not fallen in and drowned. Scouts from the fort insisted there were no signs of Indians near the Rawhide and that he could not have been kidnaped. Had he been killed by the Indians his body would have been found. The wagon crew was equally positive he had not wandered away and become lost, for the search had started shortly after his disappearance and had continued through the night and the next day.

When Quimby arrived on the scene he found the caravan and fort people wallowing hopelessly among their various theories and inclined to view the disappearance as a phenomenon.

The hunter, being thoroughly objective in his reasoning, even when accepting the supernatural, grew very angry and exploded, saying:

"Whatever happened, some one done it. Th' younker's either lost, drownded, stolen or kilt. If lost, drownded or kilt, ye'd find his body. That leaves him stolen by a Injun. What with yer ridin' back an' forth ye've wiped out any signs th' Injun mighter left."

His theory was hotly assailed, especially by the scouts; and he promptly offered to prove his contention by recovering the child.

As the efforts of the searchers had obliterated any possible signs, Quimby ignored the immediate neighborhood and rode toward the north fork of the Cheyenne River. He chose this direction as he believed the child had been stolen by some Dakota warrior sent by a war-party to spy on the train. The lone warrior could not resist the opportunity to count a coup.

Quimby sought to solve the problem by considering himself the kidnaper. In much the same biographical and egotistic fashion did he explain the purpose of the gods in producing various phenomena. Were he the child-stealer and a Dakota, he would hasten north till he struck the fork of the Cheyenne, which he would leisurely follow till within the shadows of the Black Hills. Once camped with his people at their grim feet he would defy the whole United States Government to recover the child alive.

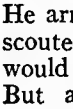
"That's th' way th' game was played," he conlcuded. "A —— Dakota come to spy an' sneaked him away to where his hoss was hid; then hell f'r leather f'r th' Cheyenne."

Having done his part by establishing this line of reasoning he shifted the responsibility to his medicine. Either he was *wakan*, or wasn't. He could now relax and indulge in a purely speculative study of the firmament. The immensity of the zenith always filled him with awe, especially at night, when there were no earth sights to divide his attention. His inability to understand how the light of the stars could shine through the opaque blackness without dispelling it troubled him.

He often hunted for the weak spot in his philosophy which permitted this fact to go unexplained. He was not satisfied with the Shoshonean explanation that the heavens were domed with ice, through which the stars had melted holes. This theory did not take the sun into consideration. Equally objectionable was the buffalo-hide stretched over the earth each night by the four wind-gods, as there was no provision made for the hide during the daytime.

"Wal, somebody sure fixed it," Quimby finally ended his meditations by deciding.

And he pointed his pipe-stem at the spangled canopy, a propitiatory act that he might continue *wakan* if it chanced some god was on duty to take note of his homage.



IN MAKING the fork he had swung far west that he might be outside of the trail of the kidnaper. He arrived at the river about midday and scouted swiftly down-stream, confident he would soon find signs of a fresh crossing. But although he rode far and observed

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old trails aplenty, left by both man and beast, he did not discover the fresh tracks of a pony, weary from hard travel and a double burden. He retraced his course to make sure he had overlooked no signs in his haste. He arrived at where his own trail struck the fork without finding a trace.

"A Dakota took him alive. He hustled f'r home, where he can adopt him or hold him f'r ransom. He hit this fork atween me an' th' Little Missouri Buttes country. If he done anything else he was plumb *heyoka*—I'll scout plumb up to their villages tomorrer," he doggedly insisted.

He was positive the kidnaper had not struck the fork up-stream from his position. But even had he done so he would leave a trail in following the fork home. Yet a bit of the day was left, and, although he knew it was a waste of time, the hunter prodded his weary nag a few miles southwest, just for the sake of doing something. What was his astonishment at coming upon a characteristic sign of "direction," such as any Plains tribe might leave for the guidance of friends and kinsmen.

It consisted of a semicircle of bison skulls on the south bank of the fork; and what amazed Quimby was to note the nose of each skull pointed across instead of downstream. In what would have been the center of the circle, had the arrangement of skulls been extended, was a key-skull. This was marked with red lines and flanked by two small rods stuck in the ground. To each rod was fastened two small rolls of willow bark containing a few hairs.

"Dod rot it!" exclaimed the perplexed hunter. "Every nose p'ints to th' Yellerstone country, where th' Omisis Cheyenne hang out. But Dakotas left these signs, as it's Dakota country an' it wasn't thought necessary to make their tribe mark. Twenty-five red marks—twenty-five braves. Th' ha'r in th' bark means four scalps was took—but none of it is white folks' hair."

He pulled up a stick and examined it carefully. Faintly outlined in the bark was a crude drawing of an ear of corn.

"Ree (Arikara) scalps, sure's shootin'! Twenty-five Dakota braves camped here arter lickin' a band o' Rees an' takin' four scalps. But why'n sin didn't they rush home to cel'brate 'stead o' switchin' off into th' Cheyenne country? It don't make sense."

Dismounting, he prowled about till he found the ashes of a small camp-fire, which he sifted through his fingers. Then he studied the bark of the rod, and informed his horse:

"That stick was cut yisterday. Th' fire was burnin' last night; or I'm a liar."

He pulled up the second rod and submitted it to a minute examination. Like the other, it contained a message his first glance had overlooked. It was an arrow, faintly etched on the bark and surrounded with hoof-marks.

Here was an additional puzzle; an arrow and the sign for "many horses." It did not refer to any animals in the band's possession, for the trail showed no such excess. The Cheyennes and Dakotas were in a strong alliance and the hunter could not believe the war-party contemplated a horse-stealing expedition. Even if they did, why the arrow? The arrow coming first was the key to the puzzle.

One fact was obvious: it had not been the band's original intention to visit the Omisis, or Northern Cheyenne, else there would be no need for this message. Something had happened after their fight with the Arikara which caused a sudden shift in their plans. It might be they were in pursuit of Arikara survivors fleeing north, but this would not explain the meaning of the arrow and the hoof-marks.

"Th' younker ain't mentioned. It's a big muddle. Reckon I'll foller 'em up a bit. If they ain't got him they may know who has," grumbled Quimby, as he made his camp by the skulls.

Early in the morning he took up the trail of the Dakotas, his deductions concerning the kidnaping turned topsy-turvy. Border instinct urged him to pursue the band. Possibly his superstitious belief he was much *wakan* and that his medicine would lead him to the child by a devious route was the spur. Or it might have been the frontiersman's curiosity, an overwhelming desire to know the unknown, an impelling force that sent so many stout souls over the Ghost Trail leading to Many Lodges far above the dust of the Milky Way.

But Quimby never paused to dissect an impulse any more than does the wolf or deer. A firm resolution to discover the missing child remained ensconced at the bottom of his mind; on the surface he was eager to learn why the war-party maneuvered in such an unaccountable manner.

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The trail showed the Dakotas were advancing with none of the stealth or speed that characterizes a raid.

They rode carelessly and threw out no scouts. No one was licensed to ride thus to the Little Powder River, where the Cheyennes were permanently encamped, unless prompted by amity. In proportion to their numbers the Cheyennes had lost more warriors in battles with the whites than any other Plains tribe, and the Dakotas held them in the highest esteem as fighters.

Late that afternoon the hunter came to a spot where the band had camped after sending five of their number on ahead; and the trail of the five was that of those who ride hard and fast to keep an appointment. The camp ashes and scattered buffalo bones told of leisurely feasting while the main party wiated for the outriders to return.

One sign was not so easily read, three holes forming a triangle but inclosing an area too small for a teepee. And war parties did not carry teepees. In the morning the warriors had broken camp and moved on slowly as though marking time. Quimby quit the trail and made a detour behind a long sand ridge.

Near sundown he dismounted and climbed the ridge. Below and almost abreast of his position was the band in camp. He counted twenty braves and knew they had posted no scouts on the low ridges. Then he learned the meaning of the three holes at the former camp. It was a small teepee improvised from three lances and capotes or war-cloaks. It suggested a play-house; this thought suggested the lost child. Instantly the hunter was eager to peep inside of it.

He waited till the sun lost its balance on a western peak and slipped from view and then made his way to the bottom of the ridge. Here he paused till night stole through the sand-hills and the camp-fire blossomed brightly against a black wall. As no guards were posted and as no dogs accompanied the band he advanced till within easy vision of the fire and its circle of bronzed figures.

A shield of buffalo hide, stained white with clay and resting against a lance beyond the fire told him much. On it were painted four erect pipes, showing the owner had carried the war-pipe on as many expeditions and had danced the Four-Horned-Calumet. A blotch of red lines told the number of enemies wounded by the warrior, while several outline drawings of the human head announced the number he had killed. That once he had thrown away his arms and grappled with an adversary was indicated by a human hand at the top of the shield. A half moon boasted of his having shouted at the foe during some nocturnal foray.

"Quite a cuss," muttered Quimby, fingering his rifle. "Wish that buck would move so's I could see what chief done all that."

As though to oblige him the warrior shifted his position and the hunter beheld the crude representation of a hawk.

Sucking in his bearded cheeks in rage, Quimby viciously grunted:

"Red Hawk, f'r a bale o' beaver! Two o' them coups is f'r women he kilt." And he pushed forward the long rifle longingly. "If I knowed which was him—if it wa'n't f'r th' younker. Wal, he can wait."

As he withdrew up the ridge his curiosity concerning the little teepee increased.

"If they break camp in th' mornin' I'll mighty soon git th' truth," he muttered. "But if they stay there till th' five braves come back I'll be up in th' air. If they'd only quit camp f'r a bit I'd risk it. If they'd all quit camp—all quit camp——! Why not?"

He reached his horse and threw on the saddle. Some ten or twelve miles ahead was a small creek. The ridge extended nearly to it. With the North Star to blaze the way he pushed on, his scheme for decoying the warriors from camp rapidly taking shape.

Leaving his mount to slack his thirst at a pool of water he crossed the creek and followed the bank up-stream for a quarter of a mile. Then by the light of a grass torch he cut some willow sticks and worked on them with his knife. His task was soon finished.

SUNRISE found Quimby back on the ridge watching the warriors crawl from their capotes to roast meat after the Dakota fashion of holding it over the flames on sticks. The hunter waited eagerly. If they struck camp he would learn what was in the teepee. If they remained in camp he was confident some of them would ride to the creek and observe the signs he had left. If none left camp

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there was an excellent chance of the returning warriors finding his signs.

"An' havin' had one fight with th' Rees they'll swaller th' bait at least till they find there ain't no trail. That'll give me time to operate," he mused.

The sun crawled higher and he detected an air of restlessness below. First one, then another brave would stand and gaze into the north, looking for the return of the five warriors. At last, as though unable to remain inactive longer, one young buck caught his horse and sped away in arrow flight toward the creek. Quimby grinned hopefully.

The camp settled down to pipes, with warriors lounging in front of the teepee. The hunter could detect no signs of life about the shelter. Two broiling hours passed, and then, from his elevated position, the hunter spied a cloud of dust in the north. It grew in size rapidly and testified to the mad pace of the rider. As a figure emerged from the dust shrill cries from the camp evidenced the dust had been sighted. Several Indians ran to their horses.

With breathless interest Quimby beheld the rider resolve himself into the young buck. He was riding furiously, but once he was sure he was being observed he stopped his advance and galloped about in a circle, the signal for discovery. As he did this he repeatedly elevated his right hand high above his head and swung it violently forward and downward to his thigh.

The gesture shouted "Come!" as eloquently as though voiced by a thousand tongues. The Dakotas responded at once, urging their mounts at top-speed in their eagerness to learn what the scout had sighted that was neither game, nor—as yet signaled—an enemy.

Quimby swung his gaze to the camp and its litter of capotes and the tiny teepee. The scout was racing back toward the creek with the band pounding along at his heels. Quimby chuckled contentedly. They had fallen into his trap. The young buck had found the parcel of sticks, a long forked one, a short thick one, and two small ones, all peeled; a separate one nicked with twelve notches, marked with an ear of corn, and pointing toward the Cheyenne River. The last was adorned with two pieces of bark.

Just as the hunter had intended, the young buck had interpreted it to mean that a band of twelve Arikara had massacred a family of four, a tall man and a short, fat woman, and two children, and with their scalps and two prisoners—the empty pieces of bark—were hurrying south. And the Dakota scout had taken it for granted the message had been left by a part of the same band he and his friends had recently whipped.

Once an extended search was made for the trail, indicated by the pointer, and none was found, the Dakotas would suspect the ruse and hasten back to their camp. But Quimby did not care how soon his deception was discovered, providing he was allowed some thirty minutes in which to investigate. It would require at least two hours for the band to make the creek and return. Leaving his rifle on the ridge, he ran down the slope and made a dash for the teepee.

Just as his hands were about to tear away the flap of the teepee a tall and powerfully-built warrior rose from behind the shelter and with a guttural cry of satisfaction lunged a long lance at the intruder. Taken completely by surprise, Quimby gave a startled yell and leaped back, barely escaping the thrust. The warrior sprang from behind the teepee and poised his lance for a second assault. Thinking with the rapidity of a wild animal cornered, and yet unconscious of any connected thought, the hunter jumped backward to the smoking fire and swept his left hand behind him and groped for what he hoped was still there.

The warrior advanced, grinning hideously, so sure was he of his victim. The hunter's fingers touched the rim of the big shield. He snatched it up and whipped out his knife.

"*Howo!* a white scalp!" yelled the warrior, circling about to find an opening. "The sun is the Dakota's friend. It glittered on the white man's gun. A mighty chief was wise and hid to see who was on the ridge."

"A *wakan witshasha* (mystery man) is never scalped," panted Quimby, keeping one eye above the rim of the shield and thrilling as he read the painted symbols on the Indian's naked breast. "It is bad medicine for the Red Hawk to strike his own shield. Every blow is a coup counted against him."

Red Hawk hesitated, his ferocious countenance growing uneasy. The point was

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entirely new. This white man, who spoke the Teton dialect so naturally, might be a *wakan witshasha*. Possibly he might be but a *pejihuta witshasha*, a "grass-root man," a dealer in medicinal herbs and possessing no mystic powers. Whether he be one or the other, or neither, it might be very bad medicine for a chief to send a lance against his own shield.

The shield symbolized his breast. It repeated the painted heraldry that decorated the muscular torso. The Hawk almost believed he had felt a pain in his heart when he first struck at the bull's-hide.

"Let the white man put down the shield and fight with his knife. The Red Hawk will throw away his lance and fight with his bare hands," challenged the chief. And as if disdaining the weapon he tossed it from him.

Quimby dropped the shield to rush to a clinch. But the savage in discarding the lance had cunningly gaged the length of its arc, and with a quick bound caught it as it fell, and with a whoop of triumph darted for the hunter. With a snort of disgust at his own lack of shrewdness, Quimby recovered the shield just in time to escape a fatal blow. And he barked:

"Red Hawk is a killer of women. He is a squaw warrior. He kills old women and makes his people believe he faced a warrior."

Screaming with rage, the chief endeavored to spear the hunter's legs. The latter skipped nimbly aside, and continued taunting—

"The half-moon on this shield is for the night the Hawk hid in his lodge, thinking the howl of a wolf was the voice of a Pawnee Loup challenging him to show himself."

Regardless of superstitious fears, the chief shifted his mode of attack and struck heavily at the rim of the shield in an endeavor to tear it from the hunter's grasp. As the head of the lance hit through the hide the hunter gave the shield a powerful twist that prevented the weapon from being withdrawn. Then casting it from him, he engaged at close quarters. Deprived of his lance, the chief plucked frantically at his knife. Over and over they rolled like a huge catharine-wheel, undersized but wiry white, superbly muscled but frightened red. They struck the teepee and crushed it flat.

Quimby crawled to his feet and wiped his knife clean on a capote and kicked the débris aside. At first he decided the teepee had concealed nothing at all. Then he discovered a long roll of bucksin which was decorated with several waved or spiral lines, the pictorial representation for something *wakan*.

"Tribe medicine," he panted, raising it to throw it on the silent form of the Hawk.

But as no dust in the north announced the return of the warriors he took time to rip open an end and draw forth a curious arrow. It was heavily feathered in blue and the short shaft of hardwood, while following the plains style, was symbolically painted in red.

The hunter was familiar with various tribal medicines, such as the flat pipes of the Arapaho and the great shell of the Omaha. He knew this arrow could belong only to the Cheyennes, being one of the four they claimed to have possessed from the beginning of the world. As women, white men and breeds were never permitted to come near the sacred arrows, he believed his was the first alien hand to profane it. He eyed it uneasily, and again was prompted to throw it aside.

"No!" he suddenly decided in a loud voice and defiantly thrusting the powerful palladium inside his shirt, "I'm *wakan*. My medicine was strong 'nough to wipe out that woman-killer. Reckon it oughter be strong 'nough to see I don't come to no hurt from the arrer. Besides, it may come in handy if I want to swap it f'r something. I'm gittin' to be a reg'lar old muddle-head. I oughter knowed th' arrer an' hoof-marks meant th' Hawk's band had th' Cheyenne magic arrer an' was goin' to swap it f'r a big bunch o' ponies. Th' Cheyennes will give anything to git it back.

"Plain as a buf'ler waller. Th' Rees took corn to th' Cheyennes to swap f'r buf'ler robes an' sneaked th' arrer. While they was gittin' away they met up with th' Dakotas, who licked 'em an' got th' arrer. Th' Dakotas then sent five warriors ahead to tell th' sorrerin' Cheyennes that their tribe medicine had been found, an' would the Cheyenne kindly count out a few hundred ponies. Th' Hawk an' his band has been campin' here an' waitin' f'r their five bucks to bring th' high sign th' Cheyennes are keen to trade."

As he made haste to withdraw from the danger zone he rejoiced he had not followed his first impulse to throw the arrow away. If it were worth many horses to the Dakotas

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it would be worth as much to him. Either the Dakotas would overlook the Hawk's death and pay a round price for the arrow and make their profit in reselling it, or he would maneuver to visit the Cheyennes and trade direct.

"I'm sure *wakan*," Quimby exulted. "*Wakan witshasha.* Why not? I'm a mystery-man. Why not? Didn't my medicine send me arter them Dakotas? Didn't it tell me how to leave signs what would call th' reds from camp on a fool errand? Didn't I wipe out th' Hawk? Yas, siree! If there's a Injun among th' Cheyennes or Dakotas what knows anything 'bout that younker they'll come pretty near swappin' what they know f'r this arrer—that is, if I don't git caught in th' open an' have it took from me along with my ha'r."

SINCE early morning the red pack had hung on his trail, now sighting him as he breasted a rise, now losing him as he dipped into a hollow, but always holding the track. As the chase continued the pack disintegrated, the fittest drawing ahead. Quimby swore nervously as his mount gave signs of great weariness. Ahead was a low ridge, too long to be skirted. To cross it would be to clamp on the brakes. The van of the Dakotas perceived his predicament and raised their shrill, ululating cry.

The hunter dismounted and commenced leading his horse up the slope. Once over it and he would be within striking distance of the Little Powder, where trees and bushes would afford him cover till he could get rid of the arrow, even if escape be denied him.

"I'm *wakan*," he fiercely persisted as he stumbled upward and dragged his unwilling mount by the jaw-straps. "I'm jest as *wakan* as I was when I done f'r that woman-killer. Reckon my medicine is strong 'nough to git me to a clump o' trees or a heap o' bo'lders. Come on, ye poor, ornery ol' cuss. Don't ye understand my medicine will pull ye through?

"Once we hit cover on th' Powder one o' three things will happen: our shootin' will bring th' Cheyennes down like wolves on a dead buf'ler to s'pile th' Dakotas' game, or I'll hide th' arrer an' make 'em swear on th' pipe we can go free afore givin' it to 'em, or I'll stand 'em off till dark, when we can make a run f'r th' Cheyenne village an' git protection in return f'r th' arrer—ugh!"

The exclamation popped out as he paused to glance back. Two warriors, far ahead of their companions, had cut his lead down to the vanishing point and were about to charge the slope. One wore a solitary feather, advertising he had killed one enemy. The other, a bit in the rear, boasted a headdress of white eagle feathers that hung down over his horse's croup, proclaiming he was mighty in war and often had carried the pipe. Quimby allowed his horse to halt, and threw up his long rifle. In the fraction of a second his reason for choosing the rearmost warrior for a target was formed in his mind.

The brave in the lead was young and ambitious and eager to count a coup ahead of the veteran. The hunter's sympathies were always with the less distinguished. If he must be wiped out he preferred the young brave as his conqueror. As he fired with mathematical precision the two jerked their horses sidewise and disappeared from sight. The wearer of the single feather scuffled off, riding parallel to the ridge. The body of the other fell limply to the ground half covered by the elaborate head-dress.

"Mebbe they'll git tired o' triflin' with my medicine bimeby," Quimby proudly remarked to his horse as he resumed his upward course.

THE Cheyennes were busy mourning some great loss as was evidenced by their gashed and mutilated limbs and the wailing of the warriors and the women. The hunter broke from the woods of the Little Powder and was close to the village before his presence was discovered.

Instantly the village presented a scene of seeming disorder. The wailing changed to sharp calls. The lodges disgorged men hastily armed. When it was observed that the newcomer, a white man, was alone, the confusion subsided and his approach was awaited in silence. His horse was lame and moved with difficulty. As he advanced he signaled "peace" by carrying his right hand, open and empty, high above his head. The warriors were drawn up in two lines, between which the hunter must ride if he continued his approach. Nor did Quimby hesitate to place himself in their power.

As he entered the narrow lane between the warriors the ends closed in behind him. He allowed his exhausted animal to halt,

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and leaping from the saddle, turned and pointed toward the river, then drew the edge of his left palm across his throat. The condition of his mount, his desperation in seeking sanctuary with the implacable foe of his race, was sufficient to inform the grim warriors that he was hotly pursued. His gesture, signifying "Throat Cutters," was the conventional designation of the Dakotas.

Tall-Trail, an aged chief, advanced a few paces and motioned for him to advance. As the hunter complied his rifle and knife were whisked from him. Ignoring the warriors, he addressed Tall-Trail in Teton Dakota, saying—

"I have killed two war chiefs of the Dakota—Red Hawk and one whose name I do not know."

Long intercourse with the Dakotas had familiarized the Northern Cheyennes with this dialect, and Tall-Trail promptly replied:

"The white man has killed two good friends of the Omisis Cheyenne, if he speaks with a straight tongue. The Dakota shall have him."

"I see many horses near the village. My medicine tells me five Dakota braves have been here to say Red Hawk's band is bringing the magic arrow of the Cheyenne," Quimby continued as though not hearing the chief's sentence.

Tall-Trail's gaze quickened. The white man must be very wise to know of the Dakotas' visit. He replied:

"The sacred arrow flew up in the sky. It now comes back to the medicine lodge because the Omisis have shed their blood and wailed night and day since it left."

"Is it ponies or the Cheyennes' sorrow that brings it back?" demanded the hunter. "The Dakota drive hard bargains when they want ponies."

"The white man will die by torture," was the calm reply. "He may say what he will. Dead men can talk only to spirits. Tall-Trail is not afraid to say his people have mourned for the magic arrow which flew into the sky and on falling to earth was picked up by cowardly Arikara. The Dakota took it from the corn-shellers, and, being friends and brothers of the Cheyenne, are bringing it here.

"Because the Omisis Cheyenne, who anciently sat in the Great Camp Circle north of the east entrance, love the Dakota they will give them two hundred ponies—and a white man. The white man can think about it when he follows the Ghost Trail in search of the Many Lodges."

Quimby checked a nervous impulse to glance toward the river to see if the Dakotas were yet in sight, threw out his right hand, fingers distended, and haughtily said:

"I am unarmed. Do as you will with me. But the Dakota have no medicine arrow to give the Cheyenne. Red Hawk, their chief, is dead. The medicine of the magic arrow killed him, just as it killed the Arikara, who first stole it—I am *wakan* who say this."

Tall-Trail eyed him contemptuously and was about to direct his removal when a band of horsemen burst through the woods and rode down on the village, yelping triumphantly. Not till within the immediate presence of Tall-Trail and the prisoner did they rein in their foaming steeds. Then a sub-chief leaped from his pony and pointing his finger at the hunter, cried:

"That white man there has the great medicine arrow of our friends, the Cheyenne. The Dakota are very brave. They killed and scalped the Arikara, who stole the arrow. They will now kill and scalp the white thief who stole it from its medicine teepee."

And he would have seized Quimby had not the hunter stepped beside Tall-Trail, loudly declaring:

"The Omisis Cheyenne can get the arrow from the white man without giving ponies. The slayer of Red Hawk does not sell tribal medicine as if it was a buffalo robe. He *gives* it back to a great people."

Tall-Trail, who was bewildered by the Dakota's confession, began to understand the situation was vastly different from what he had supposed—and two hundred ponies were two hundred ponies. He made a sign and a score of his warriors pressed in between the hunter and the Dakota. Then with his own hands did the chief eagerly search the prisoner. Finding nothing, he harshly demanded—

"Where is the arrow?"

"It is hidden where only I can find it. It was hidden so the Dakota could not make the Cheyenne give ponies for it."

"The Cheyenne made a bargain over the pipe to give the Hawk's band two hundred ponies for it," fumed the Dakota leader.

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"Be silent, you loser-of-the-medicine-arrow," sternly commanded Quimby. "Had I a bow I would strike you across the face with it."

As striking an enemy with a bow was the greatest insult one could offer a warrior, the sub-chief sounded a wild cry of rage and would have brained the hunter had not several Cheyenne lances fenced him off and forced him back.

Tall-Trail raised a hand for quiet, and said:

"The Omisis are ready to give the ponies. But it was in the bargain that the Dakota should bring the arrow, not a white man."

Scarcely able to articulate because of his wrath, the sub-chief retorted:

"The Dakota have brought it by driving here the white man who has it. They fought the battle of the Omisis when they whipped the Arikara and took four scalps. The white man left signs ahead of the Dakota's path that said an Arikara war-party had killed a lodge of four. We left camp to find them and whip them, thinking them a part of the band we already had fought. While we were gone from camp that white snake there stole into our camp and took the arrow. Give him to us and before another sun we will make him tell where the arrow is."

Tall-Trail weighed the proposition carefully. While desirous of retaining the ponies, it might be greater wisdom to let them go and retain the good-will of the Dakotas, the buffer between the Cheyennes and the encroaching whites. Quimby sensed the new menace and loudly boasted:

"Armed only with a knife, the white man fought the Hawk, who carried a lance. It was the medicine of the arrow that fooled the Dakota by a child's trick. It was the arrow that made the white man strong to kill Red Hawk. The arrow knew the white man was *wakan*."

Admiration for the hunter's ruse and bravery was sparkling in the eyes of the Cheyennes, and his last words excited Tall-Trail's supernatural fears. If the sacred arrow had permitted the white man to be the victor in a most uneven contest it would be disastrous to oppose its will. Nor could the tribe afford to part with the ponies.

"The white man is *wakan* to kill the Hawk with a knife," gravely decided the chief; and Quimby's heart resumed its normal functions. "If he returns the sacred arrow he shall go unharmed."

Whereat the Dakotas raised a loud protest. Tall-Trail ignored them, and added—

"Our white brother shall tell where he hid the arrow so my young men may go and get it."

QUIMBY drew a deep breath and approached the second climax of his adventure by saying:

"A boy, so tall—" and he measured the height with his hand—"was taken from a wagon-train on the Rawhide. That boy must be returned to me unhurt. The medicine of the arrow commands it."

Tall-Trail's eyes flashed with fire at this evasion and he ominously reminded:

"The white man is a prisoner. If the Omisis give him over to the Dakota——"

The Dakotas grunted deep approval.

"The Cheyenne do not wish to get the arrow back," jeered Quimby. "They have three left. Until they are stolen, three will be enough. The lost arrow will seek a nation that puts its welfare before that of a boy, so tall—that is it."

"What has the tribal medicine of the Cheyenne to do with a white boy?" fiercely demanded Tall-Trail.

"Perhaps it is lonely and would be back with its three brother arrows—but it does not return till I get the boy. A Dakota took the boy——"

"Crooked tongue and lies!" yelled the Dakota leader.

"Ask the Dakota to turn him over to me."

The Dakotas redoubled their indigation and derided the Cheyennes for allowing one man of the hated race to dictate to them. Tall-Trail shifted uneasily.

"The Dakota say they have not seen the boy. They speak with straight tongues. I, who have carried the war-pipe for the Cheyenne many years, say it. Let the white man give up the arrow, depart in peace and search for the boy among the thieving Arikara. If he does not, the Cheyenne will put him to the torture."

"The Dakota were promised on the pipe! The arrow is near here because they drove the white man here!" raged the sub-chief.

"A swift pony should be guarded," sententiously replied Tall-Trail.

Quimby's hopes fell flat. He had believed he was *wakan* enough to recover the

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oled mind and sought
s by saying:

"The white man is *wakan*, but he did not derstand what the magic arrow told him. nly the Omisis can understand its voice. told him to follow the Arikara down ere." And he swept out his arm and ointed to the south.

The wide gesture for a moment disarged the light deerskin robe about his eck, and the hunter went weak from mazement. Suspended from the neck and esting on the painted chest was a wooden op. It was a long trail back to Quimby's oyhood, but his allegiance to the Tribe of outh had never weakened. For a moment e was eight again and spinning tops. He new he had beheld property taken from the jeans of the Baxter child.

"Gawd!" he gasped in English. "Guessed it plumb wrong all along th' line!"

A sudden fury, founded on the fear the child had perished, made him forget his safety depended on the word of Tall-Trail, and shaking his finger under the chief's nose, he fairly roared at the astounded savage:

"The Cheyenne took the boy! I'm *wakan* —I *know*. The medicine of the arrow tells me. You lost it because you stole the boy. Now listen to me, *wakan witshasha*, the mouth of *Wakanda*, for this is it — the Omisis Cheyenne shall find no more buffalo, but shall be driven from their lands and have no home except on their ponies' backs unless the boy—so tall—is brought to me *now*."

Tall-Trail, not suspecting how the hunter had learned the truth, shivered before this dire prophecy, and abjectly confessed:

"The white boy was picked up by one of our scouts, spying on the train. He is unharmed. He shall be brought here. The white man is all *wakan*."

"And with him bring three fresh ponies, for mine is lame, and we must have an extra mount. Then Tall-Trail shall go with us alone to the timber and receive the arrow. But first he shall swear on the pipe to keep his bargain and hold the Dakota here one sleep."

"The words of the *wakan witshasha* have reached the ears of the Cheyenne, and the Cheyenne find them good. The Dakota shall feast with their brothers for one sleep. It shall be sworn to on the pipe," gravely replied the chief. And as an earnest of his sincerity he handed back the hunter's rifle.

"Wal, I reckon th' ol' cuss means it," mumbled Quimby.

NOT till Fort Laramie was sighted did the hunter allow the ponies to drop into a walk. And to the sleeping boy on the saddle before him he proudly cried:

"Kilt, lost, or drownded, eh? Huh! Th' notions some fool scouts'll git into their heads beats all creation. When anything's done, some one done it. That's hoss-sense, younker. But sometimes it takes a man what is *wakan* to figger it out."

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MR. HOBBS

by Hugh S. Miller

Author of "The Eye of the Hawk," "Percival," etc.

THE quiet of the tropic night which enveloped the little sloop was broken by the soft voice of the girl at the tiller.

"Are you awake, American?"

The man seated on the deck, leaning against the cabin top, stirred and sighed.

"Almost, little girl," he replied, amiably.

"You can see the hills of Namba-dan now."

He turned and looked ahead over the black and lazy sea to the dark outline which rose to meet the star-flecked sky.

"We shall be in Boala by dawn," said the girl.

She surrendered the tiller to her brother, a boy of fifteen, and stood for a moment with face uplifted.

"The moon is very beautiful tonight," she murmured, and held out her arms to it. "I love you," she whispered, impulsively. "I love your pure, brave light. God bless you!" She moved forward, and paused. "Good night, Mr. Hobbs!" she called, softly.

"Good night, little girl!"

"Good night, Frank!"

" 'Night, Sis!"

She disappeared in the darker shadows, and for a time the boat was quiet again, with no sound but the rustle of the water alongside and the give and take of the sails. Then the man spoke, kindly—

"Sweet girl, ain't she?"

Her brother laughed.

"Well, *we* think so," he said.

"Her loving the moon like that is a right pretty idea, ain't it?"

"Carol has a lot of pretty ideas," said the boy, fondly. "The moon, the sun, the sea, the hills, every sort of bird and flower—she loves them all."

"Reminds me some of my little girl back home," said Mr. Hobbs, "only I guess mine is a year or two older. How old is she?"

"Carol?—sixteen."

"Must be a lot of comfort to her ma," said Mr. Hobbs, drowsily, making a pillow of his coat. "Think I'll take a snooze. Fine night, ain't it? Makes me think of the park in Denver on a Summer evening, only there's no band."

THE sun was rising when the sloop passed through the reefs which marked the entrance to the bay and headed for the landing of Boala, outpost of the nondescript civilization which obtains in the remoter portions of the

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Southern seas. At that distance it was sufficiently inviting to justify the low whistle which came from the lips of Mr. Hobbs; with its overtopping hills banked with terraces of trees, the roofs of a few embowered buildings clustered at their base the semicircular strip of white beach dotted with a few native boats, which the emerald-green sea endeavored indolently to reach, and a couple of picturesque vessels dozing idly at anchor in the foreground—the whole a picture of rare tranquility.

Nearer, the picturesque vessels turned into trading schooners, ill-kept and unclean; the white beach revealed a bedraggled fringe of weed, rising and falling monotonously with the movement of the water; the embowered buildings became ugly, unpainted shacks, weather-stained and dilapidated, set haphazard in a tangle of frayed palms, banana plants, papayas and dust-besmeared native blacks. Only the hills, exempt from the deleterious attentions of the white men who had drifted to this recess in the earth's dominion, and refined by distance, preserved their appearance of loveliness.

Mr. Hobbs, whom the morning light disclosed as middle-aged and medium-sized, with mild blue eyes and quiet manner, a Panama hat and unlighted cigar, became aware that the girl was gazing at a place some distance from the other buildings, where the corner of a house had lately come into view. Turning from the unpleasing picture of the encumbered beach, already beginning to shimmer in the heat, he contemplated her with grateful appreciation.

She stood with hands clasped about a stay above her head and cheek resting against her arms, swaying gently with the taut wire. He knew little of poetry or art, did Mr. Hobbs, but he recognized without knowing why, that a superfineness dwelt in the softly-molded face and gave it a beautiful gentleness, and that grace was in her every line and movement.

The boy observed him and smiled.

"Watching for mother," he explained, nodding in the direction of his sister.

There was a tiny flutter of white among the trees; and both children waved eagerly.

Shortly afterward the three stood on the beach. Mr. Hobbs remarked that he intended to come up and see their ma and tell her what a fine boy and girl she had; then with a genial good-by he grasped his bag and started through the sand toward the building where, they had told him, he would find Lephart, the manager of the trading company's station.

It was a low wooden structure with a gallery around it, and Lephart, languid and philosophical, was at breakfast on the side farthest from the sun. Mr. Hobbs, at his invitation, sat with him and consumed, with placid enjoyment, a quantity of fresh pineapple, papaya, bacon, toast and coffee. And as he ate he talked.

"It's more of a sentimental business than anything else," he said, in answer to a question. "I'm looking for a man named Thomas Brummer, described by his mother as big, handsome and noble, but without particulars. The latest picture she has is a tintype taken when he was twelve, and looks like a map of the island where the treasure was buried by the pirate chief. He ran away twenty years ago, when he was fifteen, and went to the coast. The last she heard was that he shipped on a sailing vessel and left it at Apia.

"For twenty years she has read the Sydney papers from attic to cellar for the notice that Thomas Brummer has been chosen Supreme Court Justice of the Southern Hemisphere or King of the Islands of Magnesia. According to what she says, he can no more help being great than a Chinaman in Cheyenne can help being discreet. He left home, she says, because the prompting of ambition was too strong for him. And because she believes in him so earnestly she has got the rest of us doing it too.

"Pretty near all, that is; occasionally you can hear a whisper that he was the worst young he-devil that ever threw a brick; but no man, woman or child in the part of Wyoming where she lives and I come from is going to let such a whisper reach her ears. We think too much of her for that.

"To the best of my knowledge and belief, there ain't an act of kindness one person can do for another that Mother Brummer hasn't done for somebody. She's the model public service corporation of all time.

"Added to this, she's the biggest signpost we've got on the upward path. She has one of those calm, serene faces that suggest a poem come to life, and other mothers point her out to their youngsters as a sample of what it looks like to be good. The effect can be felt in everything that is

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done in the county, from pie-baking to paying taxes.

"It's the same idea as if we owned a wonderful painting; merely to have it around would stimulate an interest in art—while having Mother Brummer stimulates an interest in doing what's right. And you can believe she won't tolerate anything that ain't right—forward, backward, side elevation and bird's-eye view. Her O. K. on anything is like U. S. on a three per cent. bond—it's good.

"It's no secret the one thing that has influenced her most is her belief the boy is an illustrious citizen somewhere, and one of these days he'll get a bit lonesome and come home. And when he does, she wants him to see that she has tried to keep pace with him; or, at least, that he don't have to feel ashamed of her.

"And all the people for a good ways around not only has a hope the old lady will get her wish, but has a sort of friendly jealousy against the place he's living in, wherever it is. They seem to think he belongs to them, and ought to locate himself where he got his start. They say true enough we need all that kind we can get.

"SHE'S pretty old, you understand. She hasn't heard from him, and there's beginning to be a look of worry in her eyes. And Doc Parsons says she'll probably go when the snow comes. Some of the boys got together and suggested I take a run down this way and give a look around for him.

" 'We'll let everybody chip in,' they said. 'We'll tell 'em that as a testimonial to the old lady, a stale wreath in the future ain't in it with a fresh five-dollar bill in the present, and they'll come through like rain on a two-fifty raincoat. The rest of it is up to you.'

"So I said I knew how the mother felt, and they could bet I'd do my Sunday best, and they cheered me, and saw me off with a parade. The mother gave me the names of places to look—mostly Y. M. C. A. headquarters and societies of one kind or another for higher culture; and the old-timers took me aside and said to try the penitentiaries and grazing-grounds for rustlers, and I've been playing both lists about even.

"Now—" Mr. Hobbs, with an air of regret, pushed back his cup as a sign that his breakfast was completed—"do you happen to have any one around here that answers my requirements?"

"Not exactly," replied Mr. Lephart. "At least," he went on, "no one who goes by that name or answers the description she gave you. We have several whose first names are Tom—such as 'Hollywood' Tom, 'Whisky' Tom, 'Meniddie' Tom, and 'Black' Tom—but they are big, ugly, crooked as sin and twice as vicious."

"Did any of them come from the States?" inquired Mr. Hobbs.

"The first two, I believe," said Lephart, rising and looking around the corner toward a wooden shack about a hundred yards away, "but whether from the North, East, South or West, I can't say. Men who come here are not inclined to tell who they are or why they came. You are an exception in that respect.

"The ones I named are away at present," he said, returning, "but I gather from the preparations at Halloran's groggery that they are expected back today. Until they come, I suggest we stay here and occupy ourselves with conversation and a bottle of Scotch."

He brought the bottle, glasses, and a box of cigars, and placed his feet on the rail with precision.

"If either of your esteemed countrymen had known I had it," he remarked, easily, with a gesture toward the liquor, "I should have been murdered long before this."

Mr. Hobbs poured out a big drink, took a short sip, and expressed a desire to know more of his surroundings.

"Boala," said Lephart, with ready compliance, "is a settlement of no government, no law, no advantages, no morals, and no good reason for existence. There is a rumor that the island belongs to France; and another that she gave it in change to England and England forgot and left it lying on the counter. The only time it has ever been visited by authority was when a Dutch gunboat bumped into the northern end of it, and discovered it wasn't on the chart.

"The last local census disclosed a permanent population of seven whites and fifty blacks, and a floating population of fifty whites and seven blacks. These float in from time to time and submerge themselves in a solution of kerosene and spirits of niter which Halloran dispenses under the

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name of anything one asks for. At such times the only thing that prevents Boala being the wickedest city between Gehenna and the Hellespont is the fact that it isn't a city.

"If it's fair weather I close up and go fishing; if it isn't I hang a bubonic plague sign on the door and crawl in bed. The others generally go to the hills. There are no sidewalks, paved streets, electric lights or tramways, but there are plenty of flies, fleas, mosquitoes and diseases. I believe that covers the main points."

To Mr. Hobbs came a disquieting thought.

"It don't seem like the right place for those children that brought me over," he said. "Especially," he added, "the little girl."

"It isn't," said Lephart, with emphasis. "It's the one thing," he went on, suddenly grave, "that is wrong—all wrong. Fortunately the beasts who hang around Halloran's are too lazy or drunk to stir about the place, and Carol is never seen down here. I doubt if they even know there is a family named Ballantyne on the island. But it is dangerous—deadly dangerous. A chance meeting——"

He paused.

"I sent *my* wife and girls back the day after they came," he concluded, grimly.

"And why," asked Mr. Hobbs, rolling his cigar smoothly between his lips, "don't they go somewhere else?"

Lephart shook his head.

"It's a case of Simon-pure hard luck. The father died shortly after they came, six months ago, and the mother hasn't recovered from the shock. The children are trying to make enough with the sloop, which belongs to my company, to get to Sydney. They can take a steamer at Suva." He kicked a centipede from the veranda. "They need only about fifty dollars more."

Mr. Hobbs stirred.

"But they won't take it," said Lephart.

Far away in the forest a parrot screeched.

"It's thrilling, somewhat," said the trader, reflectively, "to live where men are free from the restraints of both police and conscience; it gives one an opportunity to see what becomes of the animal instincts when they run wild. Take Hollywood Tom, the leader, for example. His favorite amusement is slicing off the ears of any one who offends him—a pleasant fancy said to have been suggested by a paper-backed yarn laid among the Malays. What a contrast between that and the good deeds of the Mother Brummer you described! She is a dispenser of blessings; he of mischief. She is of priceless worth; he is a fearful menace. Of such is the kingdom of man."

"Variety," said Mr. Hobbs, "is the nutmeg of the custard."

"For my part," returned Lephart, "I prefer it plain. I've had too much of the other. But business is business with me as with every one else. The day will come soon when I won't have to stay here. Did you say what your line of business is, Mr. Hobbs?"

"I don't remember that I did," said Mr. Hobbs. "Stage, mostly," he added, with becoming modesty.

Lephart recalled a boy from Gulgong who had gone into theatricals, and he wanted to know if Mr. Hobbs had ever heard of him. Mr. Hobbs had not, and no bond of mutual acquaintance was established, but the slight digression was sufficient to divert their thoughts, and the conversation drifted into other channels.

Morning passed, then afternoon, and twilight deepened into evening, bringing with it a languorous peace irresistible alike to Lephart's seasoned temperament and the Northern alertness of Mr. Hobbs. Countless flashing fireflies went through advanced evolutions, a chorus of tree-frogs joined in a pretentious, if ratchety, evensong, and the sweet night breeze, balmy with the perfume of tropic glade and grove, whispered enticingly of the fairy haunts it alone had seen; but without avail. The two men slept soundly in their chairs.

THE languorous peace was disturbed by the crack of a shot and a burst of coarse laughter, softened by distance. Lephart sat up quickly; Mr. Hobbs lowered his feet carefully from their elevation.

"Here they come!" said the trader.

A single rough voice shouted a profane greeting to Halloran.

"And that's Hollywood Tom."

Mr. Hobbs got up to go, and Lephart, not without hesitation, followed suit. They paused in front of Halloran's, a bald, shed-like structure, without veranda or embellishment, set in a plot of dust. Two dirty oil-lamps hanging from chains disseminated

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enough of a yellow glow to illuminate the principal features of the interior without revealing the actual details. It was thus thoroughly possible for a person to satisfy himself of the size and color of his drink without being annoyed by the sight of the flies in the bottle or the unwashed state of his glass.

The back wall was furnished with a few shelves on which was disposed the stock in trade, and before this was a crude affair that served as a bar. Two tables made from misfit boards, and benches of the same character, completed the equipment of the place. From the door Mr. Hobbs took note that Halloran was of the heavy-jowled, pig-eyed, animal type that can be seen behind bars wherever the language is spoken, and he turned from him without a second glance. The patrons of the establishment he surveyed with greater care.

About ten there were, odd-sized and shaped, from the one Lephart pointed out as "Portugee" Jim, a small, thin, sharp-featured man unpleasantly suggestive of the savage-looking blade visible in his belt, to Hollywood Tom, the biggest of the group, a brutish creature, at the moment sober and correspondingly sullen.

One had an eye missing; another a blood-stained bandage on his arm; a third obviously was something of a dandy, with his garments passably clean and a broad black silk belt about his waist; still another affected the gipsy, with a red handkerchief on his head—and so on; but all were armed heavily and ostentatiously, and had on their faces the ineradicable stamp of cruelty and its copartner, crime.

"It 'd be pretty tough on the old lady if he was one of them," said Mr. Hobbs, softly, as they stepped in at the open door.

The men gave them a glance, half suspicion, half scowl, as they advanced to the bar.

"Friend of mine," said Lephart to Halloran, indicating Mr. Hobbs. "Showing him the sights of Boala."

"There they are," said Halloran, rudely nodding toward Hollywood Tom and his party and at the same time producing a bottle and glasses.

The quip received its meed of laughter from all but two or three, among them Hollywood Tom.

A little later, finding himself beside the one Lephart told him was Whisky Tom, Mr. Hobbs asked, casually—

"From the States?"

"What about it?" demanded the other.

Mr. Hobbs, unabashed, looked up at him quizzically.

"Let's see," he said, pleasantly, "ain't you Tom Brummer?"

"Who?" growled Whisky Tom, vacantly.

"It's the light," said Mr. Hobbs, confessing his error. "I'd have sworn for a minute you were him."

The other gazed at him balefully from under beetling brows; then laid a hairy hand on his shoulder.

"Don't ask questions," he rumbled, with an impressive, rather sinister, quality in his voice.

At the same time he drew a forefinger across his throat with graphic flourish.

"I see," said Mr. Hobbs, nodding. "I get you," he added, significantly, to show further that he was grateful for the warning.

Nevertheless, such is the native perversity of some men, he turned away directly and fell to contemplating Hollywood Tom speculatively, with a look in his eyes that could mean nothing else than impatience at the noisy cluster which surrounded him and rendered him difficult of approach. It was not for half an hour, in which time the festivities had reached the condition of tumult, that he succeeded in making his way to the leader's side. He observed then that he was still dully sober.

Hollywood Tom's eyes were black and of fish-like coldness, and regarded Mr. Hobbs with the degree of animation found in the glass orbs supplied to defunct inmates of museums of natural history.

"From the States?" inquired Mr. Hobbs, politely.

Hollywood Tom made a slight affirmative motion.

Mr. Hobbs tilted his head, squinted earnestly, and assumed the expression that goes with an effort of memory.

"Let's see," he said, "ain't you Tom Brummer?"

"What about it?" said Hollywood Tom.

Mr. Hobbs, displaying none of the triumph which usually attends the successful completion of a search, announced himself as a friend of his mother's.

"I came all the way here to look you up and tell you she wants you; that she hasn't thought of anything else for twenty years;

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and she'd like for you to take a run home and see her. She's real old now and only has a few months to live."

Hollywood Tom's answer was to open his mouth in a loud, fetid, alcoholic yawn, exposing an array of black, decayed teeth; upon which a glint that was out of keeping with the impression of mildness created by his manner came into Mr. Hobbs' eyes. There being in his philosophy a provision which inclined him to take a hopeful view of every circumstance, no matter how inauspicious it seemed, it slowly faded, and he began again:

"Her hair is white and her back is bent and she walks very slow, but you'd be proud of her. She's the emblem of everything that's fine, and there ain't a question she's the most celebrated woman in the State today. Her sight is dim from looking for good in everybody, and her fingers are trembly from doing things for people, but her eyes would sure glisten with happiness to see you come in the door, and her hands would sure twitch with gladness to get a hold of you.

"Maybe you didn't hear me a minute ago—I was saying she wouldn't be with us much longer—and when she goes, believe me, the big light in a whole lot of people's lives will go out. That's the kind of a mother, my boy, that's waiting for you. Will you come?"

To his surprise, Hollywood Tom's gross face manifested something akin to pleasure.

"So she's made the family name famous, has she?" he chuckled, with genuine amusement.

"From one end of the State to the other," said Mr. Hobbs. "The governor, every time he comes around, makes his first call on her. Up in Sheridan they named a park after her. Down in Laramie they had a Brummer Day to raise a fund for widowed mothers. In Landers they——"

"That's plenty," Hollywood Tom drawled, a lazy sneer supplanting the temporary clearing of his features. "I've always had a hankerin' to go back an' surprise some of them high-heeled heroes, an' it looks like it's about time. You go tell her I'm busy right now, but to wait for me an' I'll be along. An' when I come," he appended boastfully, "I'll paint that sage-brush State so red it'll run off the map the first good rain; I'll make everything Jesse James did sound like the frolics of an Easter rabbit; an' I'll chase them milk-fed sheriffs over the hills so fast they'll burn the timber off.

"Yes," he said, "you tell her the prodigal son is comin' home to do his share for the name of Brummer." And again he indulged in a silent laugh. "It'll be famous from New York to New Guinea when *I* get through."

Mr. Hobbs, in whose cheeks had appeared a tinge of red, regarded him keenly.

"What's your name?" Hollywood Tom inquired, suddenly.

Mr. Hobbs told him.

"What's your business?"

"Stage," replied Mr. Hobbs, curtly.

Hollywood Tom swept him, from his fatherly face to the thickening of his waist and wide, shapeless shoes, with a glance of ironical interest.

"Tights, I suppose," he said, "and yellow curls. Well," his voice became gruff, tyranical, insulting, "I need entertainment; let's see what you can do; an' mind you give us the best you've got," he added unpleasantly. "Some of these boys throw knives instead of eggs."

He spoke loudly and the whole room heard and sent up a yell of approval.

Mr. Hobbs thought a moment, and when he answered it was with difficulty, as if embarrassed by the unexpected call.

"All right," he said, quietly, "I guess I can do a card-trick or two if somebody will lend me a pack."

Halloran produced one, dog-eared and dirty, then spread fat elbows on the bar and leaned forward to watch; the others arrayed themselves in a rough semicircle; and Mr. Hobbs, with Lephart at his side, prepared to fulfil his promise.

He shuffled the cards brilliantly, but beyond this his performance lacked the professional dexterity usually to be found in such exhibitions. There was, at least, no graceful monologue, no brandishing of arms, bared to the elbow, or fluent fingers eloquent of years of practise. Instead, the hands that wielded the cards were conspicuous more for their breadth and knotted toughness than for tapering elegance, and, as he proceeded, appeared to those who watched to be unduly awkward, even to fumble.

Counting twenty-one cards at random, he dealt them face-up into three stacks, meanwhile asking Hollywood Tom to note one and remember which pile it was in.

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Hollywood Tom indicated the one nearest him; and this heap was the second taken up by Mr. Hobbs in collecting the cards.

Twice more he dealt them into three piles, Hollywood Tom each time pointing to the one that held his card; and when he had gathered them for the third time, methodically began to count off again. The eleventh card he turned up was the one that Hollywood Tom had chosen. It was the type of trick every child can perform.

There was no applause. Somebody groaned; a few hooted derisively or uttered ready oaths; and Portugee Jim gave an exaggerated, drawn-out sniff.

"It smells!" he said, laconically.

Hollywood Tom said nothing.

If Mr. Hobbs was disturbed, he showed no sign of it, but went on to extract the aces and kings from the deck and arrange them in his hand. By holding them face down, placing the first and alternate cards on the bottom, and turning up every second card, he brought out the aces and kings neatly paired.

"It ain't so easy, at that, if you don't know how," he said to Hollywood Tom.

The latter, who had been looking at him meditatively for some moments, slowly smiled. It was a small, wicked smile which, in the yellow light from the dirty lamps overhead, enhanced instead of softened the malignity in his features. His eyes shifted to Mr. Hobbs' face and from one side of his head to the other; his fingers strayed to a handle which projected from his belt. The gaze of every one in the room was fixed upon this hand.

Lephart swayed toward Mr. Hobbs.

"Run!" he breathed.

The hand came to a rest, grasped the knife lightly, pulled the blade an inch, perhaps two, from the sheath—and let it go quickly to receive the weight of a boyish figure in white which had sprung in the door, and with a sob of fury, thrown itself at him. The impact drove him back a step against the bar; then with a lurch he delivered a blow which felled his assailant with a crack like the breaking of a board. It was Frank, Carol's brother, who had thus interrupted. He lay quite still where he had fallen.

When he opened his eyes, presently, he looked up into the troubled face of Mr. Hobbs, whose arm was supporting him.

"What's the matter, sonnie?" inquired Mr. Hobbs.

The boy extended his hand toward Hollywood Tom.

"He—he—my sister!" he said, chokingly.

Mr. Hobbs, remaining on one knee beside him, spoke a few soothing words, then seemed, for a brief period, to sink into a state resembling reverie, from which he was aroused by the sound of voices.

"You always was a devil with the women," said Halloran.

"Just happened to see her cuttin' across the clearing," said Hollywood Tom, complacently. "Broke away from me an' ran like a scared lizard. Then it got dark an' I couldn't track her. Tomorrow—" his lips widened in a hideous grin—"the boys are goin' with me on a huntin' trip."

With a hoarse cry the boy leaped to his feet and charged again unsteadily. Hollywood Tom snarled as he saw him coming, caught him easily by the throat with his left hand, and extended his right for a bottle on the bar behind. Amid complete stillness he raised it overhead. An instant he held it, while the gurgling liquor ran the length of his arm, then brought it down heavily.

IN THAT instant Mr. Hobbs made a curious lightning-like movement. There was the report of a shot, a faint tinkle, and the bottle shivered in Hollywood Tom's grasp. Enraged, he let the boy sink to the floor and looked up at Mr. Hobbs. That gentleman, revolver in hand, confronted him with blazing eyes.

"Grab a star, everybody!" snapped Mr. Hobbs. "Never mind, Lephart! Come out here, Halloran. No—over the top."

And the fat Halloran, puffing, scrambled hastily over the bar.

"I forgot to mention," remarked Mr. Hobbs, evenly, when his commands had been obeyed, "that card-tricks ain't my specialty, and the only stage I know anything about is the Snake River Valley stage, which I happen to own. Generally I do a little fancy shooting Frontier Day, but outside of that I don't show much in public. Just at present I'm a deputy sheriff of Lincoln County, and any time," he looked at Hollywood Tom, "anybody wants to chase me over the hills until the timber burns, they can find me hanging around the store in Jackson.

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"Meanwhile, I can dot the eyes of any of you buzzards at fifty yards with a thirty-eight, and it sure will give me joy to do it if your hands move any way but up until I give the word."

He then lined them up with faces to the wall, deftly gathered their weapons, and when this was completed, directed them to lower their hands and turn around.

"Now," he went on, with deadly calmness, "I'm going to put on a performance that I think maybe will hold your attention even if it don't entertain you. It's an original act, like nothing that has ever been given before, so far as I know; so I guess I'll first explain the idea.

"Law, of one kind or another, natural or manufactured," he went on in a thoughtful, unhurried way, "is the most universally used article in the world, and justice is a household necessity. Even you people know the fundamental commandments of the human race; they are the same from Deadwood to Decatur; Piccadilly to Patagonia; only you seem to think you don't have to mind them. This being the one place you know of where there ain't any law and nobody to make it, you crawl in here like lice under a rock and hatch out evil.

"I came to find Hollywood Tom and tell him his mother wants to see him—wants to run her feeble fingers through his hair and pull his head down on her breast where it used to lie, and kiss him before she dies. If she had even dreamed he could think of such a thing as this, she wouldn't have wanted me to. Why, the kind of mother she is, if she knew he had turned out what he is, she would pray to have him cut down like a mad dog. It's a slander on her name to think she would hesitate to do it herself if it came to a pinch."

Hollywood Tom, whose face was set in a scowl of hate, moved restlessly.

"It's a pity," began Mr. Hobbs again, "there ain't a jail and a judge here. If there was, this case could be attended to regular. But the fact there ain't don't relieve us from the obligation put on us by every father and every mother in the world. There is no law, written or understood," his voice shook slightly, "more precious than that which protects the honor of our daughters.

"Now, in the name of every decent man in history, and in the name of one certain white-haired old lady whose life has been a monument to every virtue," his voice became crisp and decisive, "we are going to bring law to Boala!"

The row of men who faced him took the announcement, for the most part, with an air of sullen callousness. Two or three shrugged their shoulders; Portugee Jim essayed a grisly smile; Halloran's pendant jowls were set to trembling by an access of fear. Hollywood Tom's face had taken on a different shade, as if his skin was moist with perspiration. One and all scanned Mr. Hobbs with wicked, crafty eyes, alert for the first sign of inattention on his part.

"Lephart," said Mr. Hobbs, "you and Frank turn one of these tables around, and put a bench behind it for me to sit on. Put a box over there for him. The court will convene without further formality."

The preparations being completed, he rapped on the table with the butt of his revolver, and raising his voice, proclaimed:

"Hear ye! The first division of the Criminal Court of the District of Boala, established this day by public necessity, is hereby declared in session. The appointment of Henry Hazlewood Hobbs as presiding judge *pro tem.* is announced. The court will hear the evidence in the case of the people against Hollywood Tom. The prisoner will take his seat."

Hollywood Tom bared his teeth in a beast-like grimace of malevolence, and remained unmoved until the opening in the end of the court's revolver was directly in his line of vision; then slouched forward and seated himself.

"We will dispense with the choosing of a jury—for obvious reasons," said the judge. "Frank Ballantyne will take the stand."

When the boy had struggled through his story the court announced that the prosecution rested its case and called on the prisoner to testify in his own defense. Hollywood Tom maintained a sulky silence; but his tongue moved rapidly in and out, moistening his lips, and the skin of his face was glistening wet.

"Does the court understand," inquired Mr. Hobbs, calmly, "that the prisoner neither admits nor denies this crime?"

Hollywood Tom muttered a curse.

"Then the case is closed," said Mr. Hobbs. "The prisoner will stand up."

Again Hollywood Tom obeyed unwillingly.

Mr. Hobbs, who also had risen, was paler

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than usual, but showed no other sign of agitation. In the moment that preceded his further speech, the quiet of the warm, moist night deepened. The sudden shrill clatter of an insect outside the open window caused several of the men to jump.

"A few minutes ago," resumed Mr. Hobbs, "before the session of the court was opened, the prisoner made a statement in this room, in the hearing of the presiding judge, which could mean nothing else than that he admitted his offense. On this and the testimony of the witness who has just been heard, the duty of the court is clear. The prisoner is declared to be guilty."

The boy Frank caught his breath with a sound like a gasp. Mr. Hobbs laid his left arm across his shoulder and held him close.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said, "justice is a cold-blooded proposition, and the hand of the law sometimes needs to be very heavy. The sentence of the court," Mr. Hobbs' lips were white with feeling, "is that you pay the extreme penalty for your crime, and the court hereby directs itself to carry it out. May God have mercy on your soul!"

His revolver crashed; Hollywood Tom, with face still fixed in a scowl, sank limply sideways to the floor. It crashed again, and a lamp, its chain cut by a bullet, fell and was shattered. A spreading blot of oil burst instantly into flame, which reached hungrily toward the wooden boards beyond its boundaries.

A LITTLE later, two men and a boy stood on the beach watching a schooner, black in the moonlight, like a bird of ill-omen, gliding silently toward the open sea. Behind them, the red of a heap of embers showed under the palms.

Lephart, who had been quiet through it all, was the first to speak.

"For the honor of our daughters," he said, shakily.

Mr. Hobbs, emerging from a spell of abstraction and discovering that he still held his revolver, returned it to its holster.

"And Mother Brummer," he said, softly.

MESSMATES

BY WARREN ELLIOTT CARLETON

A WHIFF of tar blows up in the night
From the docks where the fishermen lie,
And I dream of wave-caps breaking white,
With gray gulls drifting by.

She's only a sloop of the fishing fleet
With a ragged crew of ten,
But they're ten true hearts as ever you'll meet
In the rank and file of men.

They can look you straight in the eye, and swear
In a way that commands respect.
They express their opinions, and tell you where
You can go, if you choose to object.

They're rough and they're gruff; they'd never "get by"
At a dress-suit reception on land.
They just obey orders, and never ask "Why?"
When their skipper shouts a command.

It's "All hands on deck!" when to starboard white
Grim icebergs wander inshore,
Astray like sheep in the dead of night
From their fold north of Labrador.

Or it's "Liner to port!" when, out of the dark,
Bursts a dazzling palace of fire,
Like Broadway transplanted on Noah's Ark,
With the frills that landsmen require.

"The rank and file?" the gentleman asks,
"Are they men of uncultured mind,
Content to toil at life's menial tasks,
Whose speech isn't always refined?"

The man who is poor but is honest clean through,
Who puts duty and toil before "style,"
And the man whose eye mirrors a heart that is true—
These are the rank and file.

I yearn to return to the fishing fleet,
And the ragged crew of ten,
For ten truer hearts I have yet to meet
In this whole world of men!

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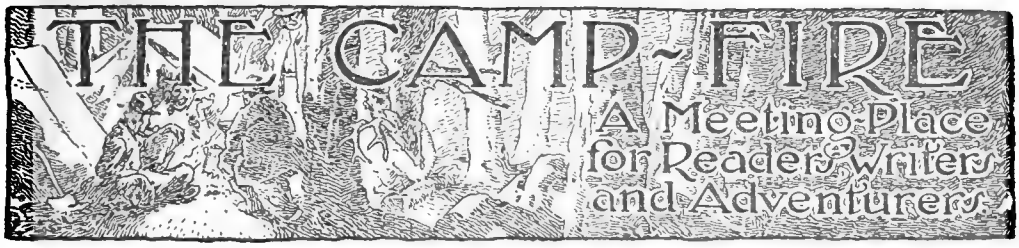

PIRATES. Somehow we never lose our interest in these picturesque old hellions, and Stephen Chalmers's pirate story in this number gains extra interest from the man of God it pictures in their midst and from the fact that there really was a priest of the same name who became famous through his fearless handling of them, his immunity from harm at their hands and his remarkable influence over them. Hear what Mr. Chalmers writes us about him:

Like my Admiral in "Admiral of the Line," published in *Adventure* some time ago, Pere Labat is based on a real character. In fact, his name was Pere Labat—not Père, but a form, I think, of Pierre.

HE WAS the missonary-priest of the West Indies about a hundred years before the period in which I set him in order to bring in the anomalous position of the Gentlemen of the Sea and Knights of the Caribbee when Charles, Philip and Morgan turned the trick on them.

But he *was* the man I have tried in this tale to regalvanize into life. The description of his visit to the Isle of Santos is just the sort of thing he did all the time and, as I say, he was loved and honored by Indians, Spaniards, buccaneers, English adventurers, governors, slaves, etc., for the good he did. And he was absolutely without fear. The incident of the Mass aboard the pirate ship is true (it is referred to in Kingsley's "At Last" and Anthony Froude's "English in the West Indies") and, if I mistake not, it was held on this same Red Daniel's ship right in the bay of Los Santos. I did not think it advisable to use it largely, merely referring to the incident of the shooting of Jerry O'Chagres and substituting for the priestly ceremonial the marriage of a buccaneer to his mistress.

TOUCHING on the Catholic feeling of reverence for the priest in fiction, there is a priest in the Adirondacks with whom I am well acquainted. He himself is a modern Pere Labat. He recently celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary; and you know what this region was twenty-five years ago—a wilderness full of trappers, lumberjacks and breeds. Father ..... won that element. Ten years ago his first real church was burned to the ground and what was built on the same spot is an edifice that seems rather to belong to a city than a backwoods village. The interior is that of a cathedral, and Father ..... is beloved of his mighty flock.

I took the tale of Pere Labat to him. When he assimilated it, he said to me. "I can well understand it. He was the sort of priest who was necessary in the time, condition and place. If your tale is based on facts, let us thank God there *was* such a priest and that he did what he did, even"— his eyes glowed—"to shooting the pirate who committed sacrilege. Anything to offend the Catholic Church? No, rather Pere Labat is something to be proud of!"

My priestly friend, however, had no personal knowledge of Pere Labat—had never heard of him, but he has since procured all the available data he can get on the subject, so great has been his interest in the man.

IT SEEMS to me right that he should be resurrected in a tale, for he is forgotten by all but a few. He wrote books, as I have described, but copies are rare. There is one in the Jamaica Institute (West Indies) highly treasured among the archives of the buccaneers. It was there I first made his acquaintance and later I had a personal hour or two with him while I sat astride an old, dismantled gun in the sand at Port Royal, close by Gallows Point. I am personally acquainted with Pere Labat!

There is also a copy of his work in the New York Public Library, I am told. It is in French, I believe; so was the one in the West Indian archives. Has it ever been translated, I wonder. If not, there's a great opportunity for somebody.—STEPHEN CHALMERS.

WHAT Michael Williams says about Tiburon Island will be particularly interesting to many of you. Also he is quite right in denying the second trip to Tiburon with which we credited him in good faith but erroneously:

New York.

I have recently returned to New York from California, and a friend has called my attention to a paragraph in your "Ask Adventure" department referring to Tiburon Island and quoting me as saying that I had recently returned from a second visit to that island, and that the island is entirely deserted by the Seri Indians. There is an error here. I did visit Tiburon in 1911, and many other parts of the Gulf of California, and in 1914 I returned to the West Coast as war correspondent with Admiral Howard's fleet during the Huerta-Carranza revolution, but I did not then go further up the Gulf than Santa Rosalia and La Paz. I do not like to be put in the position of appearing to claim knowledge (or adventures) which I do not really possess, and perhaps you will kindly correct this erroneous report.

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AS TO Tiburon itself, as your Mr. Harriman says, the stories about the cannibalism of the Seris are moonshine, together with other weird legends concerning temples and strange tribes. The Seirs, like many savages, have eaten human flesh during famine times—but so have highly civilized folks, for that matter. As to the riches of Tiburon, that is still an unsettled question. On the Isla de la Guardia Angele, just opposite Tiburon, which I also visited, oil in huge quantities, I understand, has recently been struck. But I missed it—probably because I was looking for romance, not wealth. But what I sought after, that I discovered; and I'd rather have a life rich in real adventure than any amount of oil stock.

CURIOUSLY enough, just as I happen upon this reference to my visit to the famous island (one-tenth of its great romance has never been told), I am in the midst of a novel entitled, "The Treasure of Tiburon."

It deals with the vast wealth in pearls and church gold gathered by the brother of Oliver Cromwell, the Dictator of England, who, according to legends on the West Coast, was one of the most successful of the English pirates who once upon a time harried the West Coast, capturing the Spanish galleons. He buried this treasure on or near Tiburon Island, calculating that the infamous reputation of its Indians would serve to protect it. I believe I may claim, with all willingness to drop the claim if it is not true, that I am the only *professional* writer who knows the strange waters of the Gulf of California from personal observation.—MICHAEL WILLIAMS.

CONCERNING his tale of the North in this issue Robert Russell Strang gives some interesting facts. Also on some general conditions in Alaska:

The following incident was responsible for "Christmas Eve in Sulphur Flats." The real name of the camp is ——, on Lower Dominion Creek, and it took place Christmas Eve, 1905.

THIS particular woman, who shall be nameless because she is still living in ——, went into partnership with a man in a roadhouse on the trail between —— and ——. This woman, who was separated from her husband, had a beautiful daughter aged seventeen. She herself was not over thirty-six, was an artist and photographer, and an intelligent and broad-minded woman to boot. The man in the case I judge was close to forty. One night he and the girl got into a sled and rushed to Dawson and got married. This woman had spent a lot of money on her daughter's education, and she felt it badly. On discovering what had happened she threw a can of coal-oil over a corner of the roadhouse, threw a lighted candle into it and stood by while it burned to the ground.

SHORTLY afterward she formed a Klondike alliance with a man (she was afraid of her husband who lived in —— and who had frequently threatened her) and, of course, all the "respectable" women got down on her. A week before Christmas the committee sent her a letter telling her to stay away from future dances.

Christmas Eve came around. After the Christmas-tree was disposed of and the hall cleared for the dance this woman, dressed to kill, walked alone into the hall, took off her wraps, and there, pinned across her breast with nugget brooches was the committee's letter. For some time the air was electrically tense. But she had *Mrs. Hauksbee* skinned a mile, and the men fought to dance with her. She stayed pat on her victory. Understand, it was a woman's war, and—but, enough said.

IN THE Winter of '02 and '03 I was working a lease on No. 2 Goldbottom Creek (Bob Henderson's original discovery) in the Dawson country. I was in the bar of the Goldbottom hotel one night when ——, the lucky Swede, drove up in a double-horse cutter. He was on his way home to Whisky Hill, three miles farther up Hunker from where Goldbottom flows into it. He entered the barroom, made every man there a present of a bottle of wine, serving them himself, then had a case of Mumm's Extra Dry dumped into two water-pails, with which he watered his horses. Then he signed a check for $750 and resumed his way.

This was the same —— who gave a girl named —— her weight in gold to marry him. —— was a dance hall girl in Dawson. She stayed with him about a week after the ceremony. Last time I saw —— was over in the Tanana country. He was rustling a grub-stake. He could have got away with $2,000,000.

THEN there was Jerome C—— who had the millionaire habit—that is, before coming to the Dawson country he had made and unmade millions in other lines. He and another man controlled about thirty claims on Gold Run Creek. In the private poker games at night a white chip was worth $100, a blue one $1,000. Claim No. 27 was extremely rich. It was so rich that the creek storekeeper once remarked that "because of Jerome's men he couldn't keep a gold sack in the store." Hearing of this, Jerome C—— went down and told him "it was none of his —— —— business if the men helped themselves in the drift," but he drew the line at the sluice-boxes. Actually, I have known men to walk away from 27 Gold Run who were ashamed to ask for their wages. One man had the impudence to offer Jerome C—— $500 for a job for a month. The gold was "coarse."

Jerome is dead and, being a pioneer myself, I will not say what his financial condition was at that time. I could easily fill a book with such anecdotes.—ROBERT R. STRANG.

I PROMISED to give you a letter from W. Townend, written five years ago, explaining, so far as it can be explained, the mystery in his story in our last issue, "Mr. Harrington's Wife." Here is the letter:

Well, I scarcely know how to begin. But perhaps I'll ask you a question first of all. Did you ever read Kipling's story: "Mrs. Bathurst?" I suppose you know it. Well, have you a solution as to why *Vickery* went up country and never came back? I haven't. I've read that story many times and I am as far off a solution as ever. The story gripped me, puzzled me and interested me beyond any other

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story I have read for a long time. But why? I couldn't exactly tell.

SO SOME time ago I jotted down the outline of a story which was, if possible, to have the same effect on the reader as "Mrs. Bathurst" had on me. I wanted to try and depict the state of mind of a man whose marriage is the great mystery in his life. He does not know how it came about, or why the girl ever wanted to marry or for what reason she left him, and he broods and wonders. You see, *Harrington* knows the events of the few months of his married life as he saw them; the causes that led to those events he can only guess at vaguely.

What I aimed at doing was to try and transmit his feelings to the reader. In other words, I wanted the reader to put down the story, saying: "But why on earth did she want to marry him? Why did she leave him?"

Is this a legitimate aim?

THE idea of the story as it first occurred to me was this: The girl marries *Harrington* to prevent another marriage forced upon her by circumstances which are not essential to the story. The reader, however, knows about the man with the "shadow of hell on his face," the old gentleman, and the tall, stern lady who heard the news of the marriage with such anger and amazement, and also the old nurse who "never took to" *Harrington* and knew what he was.

The old gentleman and the stern lady want *Norah* to marry the other man; *Norah* refuses and finds *Harrington* only too eager to marry her; the old nurse despises *Harrington* as being of a lower "caste," yet falls in with the plan as being the lesser of two evils. The old gentleman and the stern lady are the girl's guardians.

NORAH did not love *Harrington* at first; she respected him, of course, knowing that he was straight and honest in spite of being more or less of a blackguard—tough, at any rate (his people were fairly good). So she marries him, reckless of consequences, glad to be able to checkmate the other three. Then gradually her feelings change; the baby is gone and she sees herself as unworthy of the man she married; she hates herself for what she has done, and in a kind of remorse at having made use of *Harrington*, with no feeling of love, vanishes. Later, when it is too late, love comes. She sees *Harrington* as the only man, after all; but she has thrust him out of her life forever.

This may absolutely ruin my chances of getting the story taken, because you may have had ideas of a different nature altogether. I hope not, of course. And I feel that it would be a great error, if not complete ruin, to explain anything more fully in the story than I have written.

NOT even to you, do I attempt to explain the real relations of the other man, the old gentleman and the lady, with *Norah;* nor the way in which *Norah* disappeared from the village near Cardiff, nor the hint of the other man, *i.e.*, the first man once more, and the shadow of coming tragedy.

But, I have added a few lines in *Norah's* letter which will explain things a trifle. So I have retyped page nineteen of the story—the last page—and in its stead enclose you pages nineteen and twenty, which please substitute, using your own judgment, of course.

I have not liked having to explain so fully, because I feel that I am spoiling everything. But, surely, if I have succeeded in making you and Mr. Olds wonder at the real mystery, haven't I done the same for the ordinary reader? If every story ended in a mystery, then I should say, "Mr. H.'s Wife" needed clearing up. As it stands, though, is anything else necessary?

Have not expressed myself well, I know. For this I am sorry and hope you will take into consideration the difficulty of the task.—W. TOWNEND.

AT THIS writing our comrade of both our readers' and our writers' brigades, Dr. J. U. Giesy, is in hospital recovering from an operation which will improve his chances of being accepted for service at the front. He had made two attempts and went under the knife solely to ensure the success of a third attempt. Not subject to draft, either. Just wants to leave a good practise and a fine opportunity in the writing field in order to serve his country. He is hardly what you'd call a slacker, is he? And for several years before we went into the war he was, as many of you know, working full steam for training camps and all other measures looking to national Preparedness.

WITH his first story in *Adventure* Samuel Edward Harris becomes a member of our writers' brigade as well as of our readers' brigade and follows Camp-Fire custom by introducing himself to all of us:

Born in Key West, I left for New York when I was twenty-one to reside in the "literary center" of the country. Shortly after my arrival, I started to do newspaper work, covering the Rockaways for several Manhattan and Brooklyn newspapers.

I HAVE had quite a few adventures traveling through the Florida Keys. One occurred six years ago, when a dingey, with a leg-o'-mutton sail, in which were Frank Roberts, who is now a local alderman; Claude Albury, who sells stamps for Uncle Sam, and I, capsized out in Caldias Channel, four miles offshore. We had aboard one hundred and fifty fish, including several large Spanish mackerel. Albury, a two-hundred-and-twenty-pounder and as good-natured as he is big, had hoisted the sail and was lumbering aft when he attempted to poke me in the ribs with his thumb. I drew back, Albury stepped on a mackerel and slipped, landing on the boom of the boat, capsizing her instantly.

Now, Albury couldn't swim, and as the boom and sail were carrying the boat to the bottom I took off my glasses and gave them to him to hold while I dived to unstep the mast. I went down four times before I succeeded in doing so. As soon as I removed the mast the bow of the dingey bobbed suddenly to the surface, and Albury, in his excitement, grabbed the stern with the hand in which he held my glasses. When I asked him to pass them

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to me, he held up, between his thumb and forefinger, a piece of lens about as large as a grunt scale. I don't believe in cussing unless circumstances justifies one in cussing. . . . I felt better afterward.

WE WERE overboard but a few minutes when scores of sharks began circling 'round us, devouring the fish we had caught. I think I'm safe in saying that sharks are the only things in this world that Roberts is afraid of, and the instant he caught sight of their dorsal fins he struggled to get into the boat. But his efforts were futile—the boat was filled to the scuppers with water. I consoled him somewhat by assuring him that the only thing necessary to drive away a shark was to clap one's hand upon the water, the resultant sound below the surface resembling the loudest thunder. Pretty soon Roberts was clapping his hands on the water every minute or two.

One big, sulky fellow, nearly as long as our dingey, swam drowsily near me. I pounded the surface, and he shot through the water like a torpedo, outlining his wake a few feet behind him.

We were in the water from at least 12:23—the time my watch stopped—until sunset, five hours later.

AFTER having been in the water several hours we succeeded in swimming the dingey to a bank about a mile and a half in back of Mangrove Key, which is a mile from the Key West shore, and using our hands and one oxford (we had lost our other shoes and our hats also) bailed out the dingey and started to scull for shore. Roberts had been sculling about ten minutes and we were still congratulating one another when Roberts espied on the bank the sail and mast, which we had cast adrift. We put the mast in place again and got under way for Key West, where we arrived bedraggled and well-nigh exhausted.—SAMUEL EDWARD HARRIS.

LETTER-FRIENDS BACK HOME

A Free Service Department for American, Canadian, and Other Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp or at the Front.

Any one in the United States or Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home," or wherever else this magazine circulates, and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department as soon as censorship of soldiers' foreign addresses permits. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those fighting in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest.

When giving your military address make it as permanent a one as possible.

(As the magazine is made up several months in advance, the above notice will appear with only such stray names as happen to come in to us until there has been time for it to reach the camps and the front and for names and addresses to reach us, be put in type and then reach our readers on publication.)

HERE'S something for us from an old-timer. We surely like to hear from them:

You say "talk, don't be a clam." All right, listen. I have often wanted to talk when I saw some of the old-timers' names mentioned in *Adventure*, but I never can find any one to talk to about them. Now I am going to punish you, you're "it."

I WENT to Dodge City, Kansas, in '78; went to work for Bob Wright and Jim Langton; they were the "post traders," running the store at Fort Dodge. Bob Wright was good to me, consequently anything I read about him was interesting to me.

I was at Vernon, Texas, when it was called Eagle Flats. Ule Music, the first sheriff of Wilbarger County, was killed. The court appointed Tom Stewart in his place. Tom did not suit some of the people, so they had him ousted and A. T. Boyer appointed. Tom didn't oust worth a ——, so we had two sheriffs and everybody was a deputy.

I was one among the first boys (I was only sixteen years old) Mr. Boyer appointed deputy. We had a lovely time around that little frame court-house for a few days and nights. There was something doing all the time. The Rangers were the only hope of bringing order out of chaos. The nearest company of Rangers was on the head of Elm Creek, one hundred or one hundred and twenty-five miles northwest of Vernon. Some one had to go after them, of course it was me—I always was lucky.

WE DID not want Stewart and his boys to know I was going after the Rangers, so I had to make some kind of a stall to get out of town. I found two cowboys that were going to Done's store on Red River that afternoon and I saddled up and rode out of town with them. After I left Done's store on Red River it was about one hundred miles across the prairie "northwest on the head of Elm Creek"—that was all the directions they gave me, but I got there all right. Presented my credentials to Captain Smith, was given my supper and put to bed. Some time that night I was awakened, given another supper and we started back to Vernon. Did some riding, boy, believe me.

Things were pretty quiet when we got back to Vernon. Some of the boys told me later that they found out I had gone after the Rangers.

A SHORT time after this I helped Judge Riddle get out an issue of the *Vernon Guard*. While the editor, B. Wilson Edgel, was away on business, some of the Rangers guarded us while we were getting out the paper—in fact, some of them slept and

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ate in that little newspaper office. The editor wasn't very popular with Mr. Tom Stewart.

Oh, yes, somebody got killed once in a while, but that isn't so very long ago and it might hurt some one's feeling to mention names. Anyway we were "making history" and that's been the death of many a man. I will now offer my signature—the only one any old-timer in that country would recognize—"PEAS RIVER."

WE are all grateful to Hugh Pendexter for the "dope" he gives us on the American Indians of the early days in connection with his stories concerning them. There is much in what follows that not only adds interest to the tale he tells but gives us a far better understanding of the Red Man, who made our frontier period a long record of danger and heroic deeds:

In four of the various Winter counts (Dakota Indians' chronology) the year 1843-44 is designated by the recapture of the great medicine arrow of the Cheyenne. White Shield's Winter count for the Winter says the Dakotas captured the arrow from the Pawnees after a great battle, the Pawnees having taken it from the Cheyenne.

BATTISTE GOOD'S count for the same year (see 10th Report of Bureau of American Ethnology):

> "Brought-home-the-magic-arrow Winter. This arrow originally belonged to the Cheyenne, from whom the Pawnees stole it. The Dakotas captured it this Winter, and the Cheyennes then redeemed it for one hundred horses.
>
> "According to the Winter count of American-Horse, the arrow was recovered from the Pawnees by the Oglalas and Brules and returned to its rightful owners, no mention of any horses being made."

IN the enclosed story I have made the Arikara the thieves, as they traded corn to the Cheyenne for buffalo-robes. According to James Mooney, of the B. A. E., in his article on the Cheyenne, Bulletin 30, Part I, there were four of these medicine or magic arrows, each of a different color. The set "constitutes the tribal palladium which they claim to have had from the beginning of the world. The same authority says that when the two sections of the tribe separated in 1851 the arrows were preserved by the Southern Cheyenne. The public ceremony of "exposing" the arrows was performed as late as 1904, says Mr. Mooney. The arrows were "exposed with appropriate rites once a year if previously 'pledged,' and on those rare occasions when a Cheyenne has been killed by one of his own tribe, the purpose of the ceremony being to wipe away from the murderer the stain of his brother's blood."

IN James's "Long's Expedition" (expedition to Rocky Mountains by Major Stephen Harriman Long in 1819, compiled by Edwin James, 1823) mention is made of a semicircular row of bison skulls found on the Platte, left by a Pawnee Loup war band. The noses pointed down-stream. The skull in the middle had thirty-six red marks, showing number of warriors. Four parcels of bark on two rods signified four scalps had been taken. The war party was returning from a raid on western tribes.

The devices on Red Hawk's shield are borrowed with slight changes from Rev. J. Owen Dorsey's description of a Teton Dakota's shield, and quoted in "Picture-Writing of the American Indians," page 456, Bureau of Ethnology.

The Dakota word *wakan* expresses the idea of the supernatural, the mystic or unknown, or unknowable. In picture writing it is evidenced by a spiral line. In the sign language (which suggested the pictorial representation) the index finger is extended and pointed upward, back of hand outward, the hand (right) moving from in front of the forehead spirally upward, left to right, to arm's length.

AMERICAN-HORSE'S Winter count for 1821-1822 designates that Winter as Had-all-the-whisky-they-wanted Winter, and a barrel with a spiral line leading from the bunghole is shown signifying it contained *mini wakan*, or spirit water.

Good's Winter count for 1787-1788 is:

> "Left-the-heyoka-man-behind Winter." The man was mentally disordered—that is, *heyoka*—and advanced to a hostile war party while his own people fled. He was killed."

And so on indefinitely. A man who was *wakan* was the biggest kind of medicine, and if he were *heyoka* he was a nut. The *wakan witshasha*, or mystery man, had all the medals compared with a *pejihuta witshasha*, or "grass-root man" or herb doctor. The first possessed mystic powers; the last was skilful in the use of simples.

The old hunter's philosophy shows the influence of long acquaintance with the Indians and long separation from civilization. The Indian found a cause for every effect.—HUGH PENDEXTER.

WITH this issue the price of *Adventure* becomes twenty cents instead of fifteen. The reason is very simple—the increased and constantly increasing cost of practically everything going into the make-up of this magazine, including paper, inks and labor, etc. Those of you who know the paper field can very easily work out the problem for yourselves by computing the present paper cost of a fifteen-cent magazine and comparing it with the paper cost of the same magazine one, two and three years ago. If fifteen cents gave normal operating profits before, what has become of these normal profits now in the face of the greatly increased cost of paper?

But you don't need to know the paper field to see the reason. The increased cost of labor, material and transportation has raised the selling price of practically every commodity. Magazines are, of course, no exception to the rule. They are facing,

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in addition, the recent increase in postal rates on second-class mail matter.

We're sorry, but we have to. That's all there is to it.

There was, of course, the alternative of lowering the standard of *Adventure* and filling its pages with cheaper and poorer material. We rejected this alternative from the start. *Adventure* is *Adventure* and is always going to be *Adventure*. A cheaper magazine would be something else. If we can make it better, we will, but we refuse to lower its standard. And we know our readers will back this stand.

A WORD from our comrade D. Wiggins on Sitting Bull, Pat Garret and other notables:

Salem, Ore.

I noted with the greatest interest the letter from Mr. Rhodes on the death of Pat Garret. Also the reference to my opinions on the affair.

MY ONLY information on the shooting was the newspaper account of the killing, February 8, 1908, if I recall it correctly, and a short reference to the details of it by Emerson Hough, in an article on "The American Sixshooter," published in *Outing* in the Spring of 1909.

My ideas, gathered from these sources, are to the effect that Pat was riding in a buckboard with a companion when he met Brazee, who had leased a place from him. Pat was stated to have been unarmed, except for a shotgun in the bottom of the rig, while the killer is stated to have been armed with both rifle and revolver, the latter being the weapon used. Some quarreling was stated to have occurred over the running of goats on the land leased by Brazee, and after a few words Garret reached for the shotgun, it being loaded with quail-shot. Brazee went into action at once, and Pat is stated to have been shot in the rig, and once on the ground after he had fallen from it. I never heard anything after the notice to the effect that Brazee had been held by the coroner's jury. I understood that he was cleared at the trial.

This is not the best information upon which to base an opinion, but we used to hang people out here on a whole lot less. Mr. Rhodes is in a better position to judge the facts in the case, and I wish to offer an apology to any one whom I have unjustly criticized.

THE reference to the "folding gun" is of interest to me. I know of two of these weapons that have been on the market in the past—the one most commonly seen being a light shotgun, double or single barrel—and in addition the Burgess folding repeater.

The latter was a queer looking affair, and if a man attempted to pull a monstrosity like that on me I would probably do what the man in New Mexico did. It was hinged at the forward end of the receiver, and by some means unknown to me was capable of being folded up to a length that could be placed in a suit-case. Rumor hath it that they were in the habit of coming open when they were shot, also.

I've seen only one, and that was in a pawnshop in Ada, O. T. It was operated by sliding a casing over the grip back and forth. It was in very poor condition, so I did not purchase it. They have been off the market for a number of years now.

I think the other gun was of European manufacture, and .44 caliber. I used to see them advertised in the "Farmers' Bible," *i. e.*, the large catalogue issued by Sears, Roebuck & Co., of Chicago, Ill.

They were of fearful and wonderful construction, the idea apparently being taken from the guns used by poachers in the old countries. These weapons were used by the game thieves, and could be taken apart and carried in a coat pocket or similarly concealed.

BY THE way, William S. Hart, the film actor, is now packing a gun in his pictures that made history. It was presented to him by Otero Beeson, son of Chalk Beeson, old-time peace officer at Dodge City, Kansas (my birthplace). During his recent tour of the Eastern States he was at Dodge, and received this revolver, an old single-action Colt, from the son of the man who had taken it from the remains of a horse-thief. The late owner didn't need it where he was going, anyway. So Bill has now the real Western atmosphere.—D. WIGGINS.

P. S.—Just thought of a peculiar circumstance. A friend was talking with me a few weeks since, and we discussed the Custer fight on the Little Big Horn. He told me that as a child he had been in Sitting Bull's arms, and had felt an instinctive trust for the man. He still has a little neck-ornament that was placed around his neck by the chief. He told us that Sitting Bull had a most winning face, for an Indian, and was well known to his parents.

HE ALSO said that many people in the West believe today that Sitting Bull really went to West Point and was far more aware of what he was doing than the majority supposed. It will seem incredible, but it is by no means impossible. Did you ever try to run down a rumor and find that it really had some pretty good facts at the starting point? I did.

Whether it was really training, or just natural ability, the old Sioux showed that he was a good tactician. He was not the war chief, he was the statesman of the tribes. Anyhow, the old boy gave Uncle lots to worry over for twenty years.

I think the man whom Mr. Brininstool refers to was "Wounded Knee" (Captain George S. Bartlett), a demonstrator for the Peters Cartridge Company at the time of his death, six years since. He was the trader at the scene of the last battle with the redmen, and the vicinity was named after him, in reference to the stiff leg that an outlaw's bullet gave him. He had been a United States marshal there and had then a store at the scene of the battle. He found an Indian baby under the piles of dead three days after the battle; she was raised by General Colby, of Nebraska, and I understand still lives in that State. I understand that "Calamity Jane" was responsible for the saving of Bartlett's limb when the doctors wanted to amputate it after the bullet shattered the knee. This is only hearsay, however.—D. W.

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YOU AND DEMOCRACY II

IN THE last issue I said I had been working a good many years on a plan in which I asked those of you to join who were ready to work for better conditions in America. But only those are wanted who are ready for hard, thankless work, without personal reward, without fame, work that for the most part will be dull and unexciting, taking your time and giving you trouble, putting nothing in your pocket and probably taking something out of it, work that is likely to make you enemies and often to bring you ingratitude from those you try to help.

I hold out no promises. I make no claims other than that I am sincere and in earnest. At this writing there is not yet even an organization. There are no names of national prominence as sponsors. There is no financial backing, no promise of any, no attempt to get such promise. Until the previous announcement to you only half a dozen people even knew what the plan is.

BUT if I make no promises, I ask none. You are not asked to pledge yourself to this plan. All that is wanted is the names of those who are ready to join in the hard, dull, thankless work of putting such a plan into practical operation if a plan is presented which seems to them worth their support. If you are expecting some miraculous remedy, some magic formula for curing all political and social ills, you are asked *not* to send in your name. If you are impelled merely by curiosity, there is no need to send your name; you will learn just as much by standing conservatively to one side. If you send it only through temporary impulse, you are not wanted.

Success is not guaranteed. The odds are against complete success. But I believe the plan is such that even failure would be success, that, however small the outward progress made, there would be a gain for the country that would be worth the effort. And the gain will be proportionate to the intelligence and selflessness and perseverance of the effort.

IF YOU are ready to face these hard facts and so eager to serve your country on the dull, unnoted battle-field of every-day routine that even the chance of a sane opportunity to do so seems worth while, send your name by letter or postcard. It will not be published. Word it to suit yourself. It pledges you to nothing. It may not even be acknowledged, but it will be carefully filed.

The plan can not be given in small space. There follows a brief general statement, given in the form of a creed, that can only partially indicate even its general scope and nature, but it holds most of the essentials. The details must come bit by bit as space permits.

A Creed

FOR SOME AMERICANS

WE BELIEVE that, peace or war, internal conditions in the United States are approaching a dangerous crisis and demand the active attention of every American who has his country's future at heart and who wishes to make democracy safe for the world.

WE BELIEVE in real democracy, real rule by the people.

THE American nation is the American people. As individuals we give up to it certain individual rights to get back from it things we value more, giving ourselves as a body control over ourselves as individuals but retaining fundamental control in our individual hands. The real power and control lies in our individual hands; it is our own fault if we fail to use it.

THE American nation is what we individuals make it. Our Government is only rules, laid down by us, and some of ourselves, chosen by us, to manage our nation according to our rules and wishes. Whatever our nation or our Government is, nas or does is dependent upon us. If we are bad citizens, our nation and Government will be bad; if we are good, they will be good.

THE whole can not be greater or less, better or worse, than the sum of its parts. You can not build a good house out of bad bricks. You can not build a good government or a sound nation out of bad citizens. Democracy, monarchy, socialism, rule of capital, rule of labor, whatever form of government you please, will be rotten if the bricks from which it is builded are rotten, if its citizens are bad citizens.

WE BELIEVE that every political, economic and sociological reform movement now in existence is doomed to failure or to needlessly deferred success because of ignoring this simple fact, because of attempting to build a sound house out of rotten bricks. Their specialists plan brilliant campaigns, some of them sound, but they always forget that no campaign can succeed if its soldiers are not fit to carry out their individual parts.

WE BELIEVE in the reform upon which all other reforms are dependent. We believe that all reforms whatsoever have one first step in common—the practical awakening of the individual citizen to his individual power and control, his

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obligation to the people as a whole, his personal responsibility in whatever government the people choose, and the need of his loyalty, integrity and active cooperation in expressing and enforcing the will of the people as a whole.

WE BELIEVE we can serve best by uniting all good citizens on this first common step. Each of us is left free to follow whatever path he pleases after that, but we believe that general democracy, chosen by the American people but never logically developed and fully applied, will, if so developed and applied, automatically carry the nation along whatever path is best for it.

WE BELIEVE that good citizenship can, for practical purposes, be reduced to two essentials:

1. Active and honest participation in public affairs by each individual citizen. Democracy is rule by the people, by the majority, by the many. Whenever we allow, by our negligence or weakness, the few to control the many or to obstruct or postpone the will of the many, we sin against our nation and against democracy. And the fundamental power and responsibility lie with the individual citizens. Citizenship is obligation as well as privilege, and the citizen who takes without giving is a cheat, a thief, a hog and a traitor.
2. Patriotism is loyalty to the people. The rights of the people, or of their majority, are superior to those of individuals or of a minority.
3. Obedience to the will of people or majority, to their laws; laws must be obeyed till remade.
4. The holding of public officials to the fact that they are the people's agents entrusted with carrying out the people's will and protecting the people's interests. If in any way he puts personal, party or any other interest before the interest of the people, he betrays his trust. His crime is against the whole people, against democracy itself, and is therefore greater than the same crime against an individual and deserves heavier punishment. The public official who breaks his oath of office or violates the rights or property of the people is not merely a "grafter" or a "politician," but a liar and a perjurer, a thief, a prostitute, an enemy to the people, a violator of democracy, a betrayer of trust and as much a traitor to his country as was Benedict Arnold. He has an infinitely dirtier and more shameful thing than the "yellow streak," he has the *black streak*.

WE BELIEVE that citizenship, centering upon these two essentials, can and must be taught in our schools and elsewhere, along with *true* American history, so that coming generations shall be better citizens than we have been. The first thing a democracy should teach is democracy. It is not enough to teach a child political economy, civics and sugar-coated history; the schools' duty is to make *him* a good citizen.

WE BELIEVE that, having proved ourselves unable properly to absorb the flood of immigrants pouring in upon us, this flood must be limited to such size as we *can* absorb properly, any economic demand to the contrary being only a temporary and surface need as opposed to the fundamental and greater need of the country as a whole. To such immigrants as are admitted, American citizenship should no longer be made a cheap privilege, either by ease of attainment or by *manner and ceremony* of giving, and it should be taught to them as systematically as to the children in our schools.

WE BELIEVE that the thousands of reform organizations will realize that in the long run the special aim of each will be best advanced if all unite upon ensuring the one first step that all of them must take in common, upon accomplishing the reform upon which all their reforms are dependent.

WE BELIEVE that we can build up an organization in which most other reform bodies can join for the common purpose, yet retaining intact their present independence, organization and aims.

WE BELIEVE that, with or without formal cooperation from other bodies, we can gradually build up among the people themselves an organization that will both teach and practise good citizenship, promote its systematic teaching and exert sufficient power to enforce its teaching little by little upon actual public affairs.

WE BELIEVE that we and the rest of the American people have let the specialists in economics and sociology do too much of our thinking for us and have suffered from the specialists' natural lack of general perspective. We need their help, but it is only one of the things needed. Most of all we need common sense and the realization that public affairs do not necessarily call for a special kind of thinking but chiefly for the same kind of thinking we use in our individual affairs. Too many Americans feel that their Government is something apart from them and out of their control. It need not be and must not be.

WE BELIEVE that a first step in our work is to build up machinery for supplying, to the people at large, facts, not opinions, on holders of public office or candidates therefor, so that their actual public records, given without bias, may be placed before the people who are to vote for or against them at the polls.

WE BELIEVE that a citizen's allegiance should be given to the people as a whole, to the nation, not to any political party. No man can serve two masters. We believe in voting on men and principles, not for one party against another. We will cast our individual votes at all times as we please; as an organization we will strive to find how our votes will most further real democracy, without regard to party or persons.

WE BELIEVE that *public opinion*, expressed through the ballot or through standing laws, or expressed direct in conversation, print or on the platform, is a mightier influence than any force man can raise against it, that this force has been systematically used only by the few and generally by the worst, and that, by the right endeavor, it can be made a resistless weapon in the hands of the many including the best and wisest. A. S. H.

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HERE'S a comrade's suggestion for waterproofing our identification cards:

Chicago.

I have noticed at various times in your remarks on these cards in the Camp-Fire that you have been thinking of having them water-proofed. Being of an experimental turn of mind, I thought I'd try to see what I could do with this idea. There is an admirable water-proof cement sold for canoes called Ambroid, and within the last year or so the manufacturers have brought out a tennis-racquet gut preservative made of the same materials but of the consistency of a thin varnish. I took my card and soaked it in this varnish, with the result that I have a glassy, elastic and perfectly water-proof coating which protects the printing from being rubbed off through contact with other things in the pocket. I want to pass it on to those who would like to make use of the idea.—NINIAN IRELAND.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

Wanted—November, 1910; October, November, 1911; May, 1912; June, 1914; June, 1915; June, 1916. Address: JOHN LEO BRADY, 511 Warren St., Harrison, N. J.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
S. B. H. HURST, Box 892, Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Hurst.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N.Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, care of Starbuck Ranch, Morrison, Colo. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel: boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

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17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Skahalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Pever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

25. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Building, Los Angeles, Cal. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

Hunting and Prospecting in Alaska

Question:—"I would like to know something concerning trapping and mining in Alaska. Is there good money in trapping there? What animals would one find? What sort of equipment should be taken?

"Is any placer gold found in paying quantities? Can good claims be staked? How far in the interior would these be?"—W. E. MARR, Detroit, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—I usually answer questions in the order in which they are asked, but I think in your case it will be more enlightening to you if I try to answer what I take to be the general aim of all the questions, since I fear that specific answers would only mislead and confuse.

You seem to be contemplating a general mining and hunting sojourn in some favorable part of Alaska and you have little or no idea of either vocation—certainly little as to placer-mining. I shall, therefore, try to meet your real want in the following answer:

A man fitted for it physically and by general experience or training can—and very many do—live and do well at such a life, for there are many places in which such a combined, or alternate life, is practicable, but it is usually better to alternate than try to mine and trap at the same time, for the simple reason that the best trapping can not be had where the best mining is. The reason for this, in turn, is that the best mining is in the mining-camps, where the gold in paying amounts has been located and opened up, and here, of course, the game has been taken and scared away. Not far from the settlements, however, the trapping is often very fair.

You must not suppose that gold is scattered over the surface of Alaska in paying quantities. A man would starve relying on placer-mining as a mere prospector. These gentlemen spend their lives at the game, but between trips they earn money to prospect on at mining for others, or working at some trade or labor or calling. You could trap and probably make a living, if you understand the ways of the "critters," or learn them, and while doing so you might do a certain amount of desultory prospecting and, by chance, strike something. A small chance it would be, of course. Or you could go to known gold camps and make a living mining, and at odd times hunt or trap. These would be sort of vacation trips.

Trapping nearly everywhere is a Winter employment, largely, and in Alaska it is almost exclusively such. You must learn to buck the cold and get around in the trailless country. Dogs, of course, are a prime necessity, and four or five would do you excellently. On an ice trail five dogs will keep a ton moving; in soft snow one hundred and fifty pounds might stick them.

A 30-30, with the bullet varied, is an all-'round serviceable gun. An average trap line might take twenty or thirty traps. It depends on many things—what you are after, for one. The natives will not bother. Quite the contrary. Clothing, food and dogs are best bought up there. It would be folly to start with less than five hundred dollars. If you are new at the game, a thousand would be safer, for spare cash to go on till you had made the worst of your blunders and were down to brass tacks.

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Ivory in Africa

Question:—"Is there any possibility of getting any ivory or other salable commodity in Africa?

"I also would like to know if there is a lost tribe in Africa, somewhere near the Congo River.

"What are the business chances there? And what would be the expense of taking a trading expedition into the interior?"—REX BROWN, Atlanta, Ga.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—Ivory is getting very scarce and the large companies and only very experienced hunters stand the remotest chance of getting any out. Here and there in the interiors there are reported stores of ivory, which some chief is holding from superstitious reasons, or historical causes, or else providing against a rainy day, ivory being as good as gold coin. Rubber and palm-oil are the chief exports of West Africa, but it takes capital and a large organization to trade in them.

There are a great many stories about lost tribes, but small tribes are often raided by more powerful neighbors and decimated, or sometimes the sleeping sickness wipes out a tribe; or when famine hits a country the natives will sell themselves into slavery to those who can feed them, and so in time they become merged into the tribe that adopts them.

The expenses of an expedition depend on the size of it, the particular part of Africa that is its objective, and its purposes. In West Africa it would be made up of a few whites and what bearers it can get together. It is sometimes impossible to get natives to travel from their home. Labor is very scarce, and as the black in his barbarous condition needs so little he has no incentive to work.

I would advise you to refer to the library shelves and read:

"Liberia," by H. H. Johnston. "In the Shadow of the Bush (Nigeria)," by P. A. Talbot. "Making Northern Nigeria," by C. W. Orr. "The History of the Niger," by Coy. "Lower Niger," by Major Leonard, which I specially recommend, or any other of the numerous works.

You will then have a fairly good idea of one corner of Africa.

If you wish to see the country but have no capital your best way would be to work passage to Liverpool, England, then work passage to West Africa, or go around the offices of the Liverpool merchants that trade to the coasts and offer your services.

The Chances in South America

Question:—"I would like to have you give me some information about South America.

"Would like to know whether or not an American of ordinary qualifications could get by there at this time. Understand a little French and Spanish and have had experience in a considerable variety of outdoor work. Could you advise me any as to working conditions, principal ports or coast towns and the best methods of getting there? Am used to roughing it."—J. W. MARTIN, Kansas City, Kansas.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—The best way of reaching the principal ports in South America is by way of the Lamport and Holt Steamship Line, from this port. War conditions may have disrupted the schedule, but in any case this firm will carry you to one or other of the ports from which local steamers will do the rest to any part of the Southern continent. Write these people at 42 Broadway, New York, for their itinerary.

You should experience little difficulty just now in working a passage, if you cared to apply in person on board any ship going that way.

If you have Spanish, no matter how little, you have the prime requisite for success. Americans as a rule are welcomed at least in Argentina and Uruguay, which are the chief countries as regards open-air opportunities just now. But you will do well to remember that these people are Latins and have delicate sensibilities; they do not care, of course, to have a Northerner come down and pick holes in their way of doing things unless he has a very definite plan to improve their method and can show it to them.

In either of the two countries mentioned above, agriculture and stock-raising, sheep-raising, vineyards, and tobacco are the chief openings, and the climate is very well suited to the needs of white men. In Argentina a man having knowledge of irrigation can make a pile, I am convinced, since the only drawback to the country is an occasional drought, and the average rainfall is more than sufficient, if conserved.

Coal, petroleum, and almost all minerals are plentiful all over the country, and await the man with ideas. Buenos Aires and Montevideo are the chief ports, and from either city the great interior may be reached by way of the Parana or Uruguay Rivers. If coffee planting appeals to you, I advise that you try for a position with one of the big warehouses at either San Paolo, Minas Gaeraes, or Rio Janeiro, where you may land for an inside position at first which will give you the opening for outside activities.

For more recent and intimate information than I possess write, stating your object, to John Barrett, Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C.

The Hudson's Bay Company

Question:—"Could you give me some particulars about the Hudson's Bay Company, and how it employs men? I heard, by an indirect course, that the company is continually in need of men. That is, that their needs are growing and the demand for men is becoming greater.

"I am an American, under the draft age, and want to see the North country. Is there any sort of book issued by the company containing facts about their territory?"—J. MURPHY, Montreal, Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—It is very probable that the Hudson's Bay Company require clerical help, but a lot would depend on your particular requirements and whether you possess certain qualifications they may happen to have need for at the moment.

Would suggest your writing Mr. L. Christopherson, District Superintendent, North Bay, Ontario, and to the commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, Winnipeg, Man., putting your qualifications before them for consideration.

No, there is no book issued by the Hudson's Bay Company that I am aware of, such as you mention. Had you stated what special qualifications you possess, I would better be able to advise you as to employment in the North. I am just back after five months spent up there.

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Collecting Herbs

Question:—"I am a young man living in southeastern Ohio and am interested in outdoor work. Will you tell me whether or not collecting herbs in this section would be satisfactory and profitable? If you think it would be worth while to engage in this work kindly tell me where I can obtain books on identification and preparation of the herbs, and where I can sell them."—FRANCIS H. LANGLEY, Cumberland, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—I believe you will do best to write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and obtain their pamphlets telling about medicinal plants, and weeds used in medicine—free.

Write to A. R. Harding, Publisher, Columbus, Ohio, for price of his "Ginseng and Medicinal Plants," which will tell you most of the plants purchased, pictures them and tells how to recognize them.

H. R. Lathrop & Co., 110-116 Beekman Street, New York City, issue a small pamphlet describing plants they purchase. Cost, 10 cts. The book is very useful. Ask for their price-lists.

There are sixty or eighty kinds of wild plants in your vicinity which are salable at various prices. I believe that gathering roots and herbs on a considerable scale would be very profitable. I mean faithfully followed, like days' work, every day, would bring excellent wages. The trouble with most outdoor workers in the herb, spruce-gum, and other similar work, is that they do not actually work more than an hour or two, on an average, per day. Ten or twelve hours, put in faithfully, should bring several dollars a day during the Summer months, gathering herbs for which the market never was so good as now.

The Ainus of Japan

Question:—"Kindly send me information concerning the Ainus of Japan. What part do they inhabit? What are their customs? Are they friendly toward foreigners? What is the easiest way to reach them? Is there game in their country?"—FRANK B. WILBUR, Boston, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Ritchie:—The Ainus of Japan stand in the same relation to the Japanese as the Indians of this country to the white people. They are the aboriginal settlers of the islands, have been pushed to the northern limits of the island of Hokkaido, largest island of the group and north of the island of Hondo, whereon are situated Tokyo and most of Japan's largest cities. And they rapidly are becoming extinct. I believe there are not more than 25,000 of them at present.

They are herded more or less upon reservations and are wards of the Government. Indeed, they are such a novelty I have seen Ainus exhibited in a side show in Asakusa Park, Tokyo—and not near so lively a show as our Bill shows, at that. The Japanese consider them little better than animals, which is a fair estimate of their general character; have little to do with them and do not interfere with their tribal and religious life—such as it is.

Legends of old Japan, away back, deal with bloody wars waged against the Ainu, who then held all the island of Hondo and seemed to have been great scrappers. But the invaders—for the primitive Japanese were invaders, you know—gradually pushed the natives back into the wild places, and so far as I know there hasn't been an Ainu outbreak in the last two hundred years.

As with the ancient Hebrews and all primitive peoples, the family is the unit of government among the Ainus. They live in groups of from ten to twenty families, each group under the authority of a head, or chief. They are strictly monogamous; and if you could see the women you'd understand why one was enough. Superlatively and wonderfully ugly, they! Lacking the exuberance of whiskers which make the men resemble Australian bushmen, the ladies in Ainu society tatto a white mustache on their upper lip. It is far from decorative—at least in a white man's eye.

Ethnologists have not yet decided positively where to place the Ainu. He is not Malay, nor strictly Mongolian. Seems, in fact, to show a leaning toward Papuan characteristics.

The Ainu is not a cordial soul; but then, you'd not ask to be put up in an Ainu hut if you saw the interior first. In the Ainu country you can always find accommodation at some Japanese house.

To reach the Ainu country take a train from Tokyo to Aomori, at the northern tip of Hondo; thence steamer to Hakodate, on Hokkaido (or Yezo, as some maps have it) thence horseback or fishing-boat up the east coast and you'll find Ainus. Unless you're a scientist you won't make the rough trip just to see an Ainu; he's not worth it. Very rough country, filled with game—bear, deer, wild boar and a few Japanese apes.

Free Government Land

Question:—"A friend of mine has his grandfather's discharge from the army calling for one hundred and sixty acres of Government land. Is there any county in California, Utah, or Oregon where it would be profitable to take up one hundred and sixty acres?

"In conclusion, may I ask what you think of Trinity County, California, for taking up this land?"—B. GOOZEN, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—There is much desert land which may be developed into a paying ranch. Men are taking up more each year and developing water on it. Such desert land is found in quantity in southwestern Utah, in Arizona and southern California. There are parts of Oregon where land is still to be had by filing and proving up.

In the coast States, among the high mountains, is benchland; that is land that lies part way up a mountain in the form of a shelf or bench, where apples and cherry orchards grow and pay well. But in choosing a benchland claim one must be careful of several things: soil, water, market, transportation, storm possibilities.

Trinity County is said to have some excellent benchland open, but the transportation is almost all by packs. If the Mormons at Cedar City had not been stirred up by their preacher to grab the land, I could have put you on to thousands of acres of splendid land in that valley, but they nipped twenty-three thousand acres in three weeks. I would examine Trinity, Mendocino and Tehama counties, as well as southern California desert land.

Homesteading in Ontario

Question:—"I would like information regarding Lake of Bays, Ontario. Can I get homestead land there and make a living hunting and trapping? If

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If we were there in Summer could I get a resident's hunting and trapping license the following Winter? What game and fur-bearing animals are there? Would a Savage be a good gun for this region? Would it help me to take my chum as partner?" ——— ———, Radnor, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—If you are "a single man over eighteen, or the head of a family with children," you can homestead one hundred and sixty acres and purchase an additional eighty acres (fifty cents an acre) in any of the Free Grant Townships in the District of Muskoka—which includes Lake of Bays—that are open for homesteading. Write Hon. J. A. Macdonell, director of colonization, Parliament Buildings, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, for full information on homesteading regulations; and to Mr. J. B. Brown, Bracebridge, Muskoka, Ontario, Canada, for information concerning the free grants open for homesteading in the District of Muskoka.

You can obtain hunting and trapping licenses, subject to regulations concerning closed seasons, and if you thoroughly understand the business you might be able to make a fairly good living. Algonquin National Park is just to the north of Lake of Bays, literally alive with fur-bearers and game that recognize no natural boundaries. Beaver and muskrat and mink are plentiful—if you know their habits—and occasionally an otter is taken. There are still a good many deer in this district, but moose and bear are getting scarce; while wolves, with a big bounty on their heads, are too cunning to ever be exterminated. But, as I have intimated, if you don't know the business thoroughly don't try it in this district. Go farther afield. Mr. Ed. L. Carson, Department 10 of "Ask Adventure," will be pleased to tell you where to go.

By all means take your chum. No matter where you intend going, remember that "it is not good for man to be alone."

Regarding the rifle you ask about, I can assure you that any rifle of the Savage make heavier than the twenty-two will kill anything in Canada, under reasonable conditions. If you haven't purchased yet, I would advise you to buy a "Featherweight," model 1899, a 30-30 six-shot repeater, weighing but six pounds. That is an ideal rifle under any and all conditions; or so I have found it.

The Panama Canal Zone

Question:—"Please give me all the information possible in regard to living conditions in Panama, climatic conditions, living expenses, etc."—L. H. Dudley, Washington, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Anywhere on the Panama Canal Zone conditions of employment are almost ideal. Wages are good, ranging from one hundred dollars minimum for clerical work, to about one hundred and seventy-five dollars usually with quarters furnished by the Government. The Panama Railroad is also owned by the Government and conditions are about the same. The general offices of the railroad are located in Colon. Meals are served in the Government eating-houses for thirty cents and are better than any meal for the same price that could be bought anywhere in the U. S. A.

I worked down there three times and am very familiar with conditions and can give you details on any class of work you desired entering but all of this information is set forth in a pamphlet distributed free by the Government. Write The Panama Canal, Washington, D. C. and ask them to send you the pamphlet. There have been several hundred books written by individuals about the zone but none of these deals with present-day conditions.

About the best general information concerning the Republic of Panama is distributed free by The Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C. Write Director General John Barrett and ask him to send you the monograph entitled "Panama."

The city of Panama, Colon, and the entire Canal Zone are very healthful at the present time. The temperature is comparatively low. A man is sure to feel well for two or three years and then he begins to feel a general lassitude from the perpetual Summer. The Government gave us six weeks' vacation with full pay and transportation when I was working there and I think they do so yet.

To sum it up: I do not know of anywhere in the entire world where a man is better paid, better treated, better fed, housed, and can save more money out of his wages than on the Canal Zone.

Veterans in the South Sea

Question:—"At present, till the finish of the war, I am serving in the Royal Naval Reserve as a Warrant Telegraphist. What I want to know is this and I will put it as briefly as I can so as not to waste your time reading a long-winded yarn.

"I have a great notion to see the South Seas and, if I like it, to start in to do something there, if I am in any way fitted for life in those parts. Just a brief outline as regards myself:

"I have been in sailing ships and steamers and was ashore for a spell in an office. Then I have been a wireless operator serving on ships trading to most parts of the world, till war broke out, when I volunteered for the war. I was educated at Tiverton Grammar School, Devon, England. I am five feet five, and pretty fit. Am a fair shot and swimmer.

"What chances are there in the Pacific for a fellow who could start in, say, with a hundred or two pounds? What I would like to do is to either plant or trade; but, first of all, I would like to work for some one to get my hand in before I speculated my little capital."—A. B. B. Baker, Hongkong, China.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—Your query and contemplated enterprise interest me; and as you are a "Man of Devon" I haven't the slightest hesitancy in advising you to get to it!

After the war the South Sea Islands will be a greater field than ever for the adventurous and the enterprising. And if a man has some money with which to back his fancy, then he can't go wrong if he has gumption as his counselor.

The islands will be all the better, too, for a Man of Devon among its settlers. As one who has done his bit in the war, you will have special facilities granted to you by either the New Zealand Government, should you choose Samoa, or the Cook Island Group for your field of speculation, or the Australian Government, should your final choice go to New Guinea or the neighboring groups.

I should advise you to immediately send an application to the Minister of Internal Affairs for Australia (Melbourne), stating your desire to take

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up land in the islands as a planter, and asking for a grant of land on easy terms. Both Governments are making special provisions for putting returned soldiers and sailors and all who have done active service on the land, giving them grants of land and financial assistance.

Your service will stand you in good stead, especially if you get a covering indorsement from the authorities in Hongkong. Even if they give you a grant of land straightaway, you could still put in some time gaining the necessary experience on some other fellow's plantation.

But I am more enamored of the opportunity that presents itself of your using your experience at sea. Steam has not superseded the sailing craft in the islands, and you ought to invest in a suitable, handy craft in which you could combine the business of growing and trading between the islands. Or why not be up to date, and invest in a motor launch? I wish you all sorts of luck in your venture, and should like to hear the sequel by way of progress reports should your great adventure materialize.

The Sea as a Career

Question:—"I have frequently noticed in the daily papers the great shortage of mariners, and the enormous quantity of large vessels being built.

"What chance has a young man twenty-three years old, weighing one hundred and forty-five pounds, with a general knowledge of electricity, of shipping on some tramp steamer? Is there any berth at all open to an inexperienced man, a landlubber? If so, name a few offices in New York where one may apply for an interview regarding same?

"What is your idea of the sea as a career?"—RAY MARTIN, Rahway, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Hunt:—Like everything else, a life at sea suits a man cut out for it, and, from your description of yourself, should suit you. If it does, you will never do anything else. If you want to try it out, the method is simple and jobs are not hard to get.

To get on an American ship, go to the nearest large seaport town, find the shipping office, where you will see a notice of those ships needing men. Find the ship and see the mate or captain. If you look good, your lack of experience won't hurt.

To get on a British ship is easier because there are more of them. Go to the British Consulate, where they will tell you about every ship that needs men. To get a job these days as ordinary seaman is very easy. Here, in Seattle, jobs are going a-begging.

When in a seaport, avoid as you would hell the "sailors' boarding-house," for, although shanghaiing is almost a thing of the past, you will be surely robbed in some way. This does not apply to the sailors' homes which you will find in British ports, kept by the Board of Trade. Such a place will take you in when you are broke, find you a ship and charge you very little for it. Always go to the home when in a British port, but go to a quiet hotel, away from the docks, when in America. *And buy your own outfit at a first-class store.* The following is all you will need:

One pair rubber hip sea-boots, six pairs of good socks, with mending material. Two pairs of rubber-soled shoes. Three good working shirts. One pair of heavy pants, and one of dungaree. One heavy mackinaw coat and one dungaree jumper. Lots of soap and matches—you are your own laundry, you know. Two medium-weight union suits. Two caps. One suit of oilskins and sou'wester. Two towels, razor etc., two pairs of heavy mittens, three extra heavy blankets, one pillow and slips and mattress, bunk size, one canvas bag or box.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN IN FIVE OF ALL THOSE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS

ADAMS, "JEFF." Last heard of in Carbondale, Pa. Write your brother at once.—Address JACK, care *Adventure.*

CELLY, SERGEANT M. of the Engineer Corps. Late instructor to the 22nd New York Engineers.—Address ROBERT B. FISHER, Candidate 13th Co., 18th P. T. Reg., Plattsburg, New York.

CMEIGH, JACOB. Last heard from 25 years at Auburn, Calif. Would like to hear from some one who can give me any news or information regarding him.—Address AUGUST DIETZ, Rear 131 D St., Johnstown, Pa.

STARKS, WILLIAM N. Please write your mother. If any of his friends knowing of his whereabouts kindly notify his mother. He was last heard from four years ago in a mine about eighteen miles from Boulder, Colorado.—Address MRS. STARKS, care *Adventure.*

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

LANDELLS, GAVIN or GUY. Last seen by any of his family four years ago. Port Arthur, Ont., Canada. His sister is very anxious to hear from him.—Address MRS. JOSEPHINE BAKER, 288 Ninth St., San Francisco, Calif. E

WEAVER, JOSEPH C. Late of New York City, now somewhere in France with the U. S. Engineers. Would like to know his whereabouts.—Address ROBERT B. FISHER, Candidate 13th Co., 18th P. T. Reg., Plattsburg, New York.

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THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First February or Mid-February issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirer from the magazine:

ALL MEN, CO.; Anderson, Nelson Miles; Bounton, George W.; Cook, Lewis; Clarke, Harry; Coolidge, Frank Townley; Fisher, Fred L.; Foster, Tom; Hutton, William K. (Kenya); Hyker, Joe; Keene, Carl [illegible] Thomas A.; Major, A. S.; McCorry, [illegible] and Gordon; McKenna; Morrison, Al[illegible] Penn, John C. B.; Tarrants, Luther and [illegible]; Val.; Wade, Robert Lee; Wallis, Charles Edward; Willis' Parker or Parker Willis; S., Ray T.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan.

NUMBERS L. T., 284, C 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Will be well worth your following. In the Mid-March number, which will reach you on February 18th, it will take you through the following eleven strong stories, besides those mentioned on page 2.

Devious Are the Ways

By George Warburton Lewis

You meet *Tankersley* on the pest ship—and follow him from there on his long quest for vengeance. A story of the sea—and some of the steel-fisted men who follow it.

Dorgan's Devil-Devil *By H. A. Lamb*

The sailors of the *Wabash* wouldn't have taken particular notice of *Dorgan*, living by himself on a South Sea island; but because *Captain Bronson* paid him a visit every six months they began to wonder. See how near right they were.

Maloney and Matotte, Partnairs

By Robert Russell Strang

Maloney and *Matotte* had roughed it for years together fighting the frozen North, but at last Alaska gave up the struggle and they found themselves rich. Yet easy money has a habit of rapid departure.

The Quarry Dump *By John I. Cochrane, M. D.*

"Place is dead 'n' buried," said *Wash*, describing Fentonville. But the town has a startling resurrection when *Sim Leach*, escaped from the insane asylum, comes back to square up old accounts.

Rags *By Edward Bellamy Partridge*

The ad was very inexplicit, but it offered adventure and foreign travel, so *Dave Colton* jumps at the chance and starts on a voyage of mystery—a voyage with an unscheduled ending.

The Stolen Cache *By Henry Oyen*

An Alaskan tale—a tale of partners; of the extent to which *Tom Bevan* went to save his partner, and of the way *Slim Roberts* repaid him.

With Sharp Sword-Edges *Conclusion*

By Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

Driven from Norway, *Haki*, the outlaw Berserk, stakes everything in raising a great fleet of Vikings to fall upon *King Harald* and destroy him. Meanwhile in grim earnest *Harald* prepares to meet him—their battle is a memorable one.

Guilty *By Robert J. Pearsall*

Law moves swiftly in some parts of the West—but it is called "lynch law." The crowd was convinced that *Jeff Stewart* was a murderer, so why hesitate? Why? *Clark*, the game-warden. He had to be reckoned with.

The Sword of Kara Mahmoud

By H. A. Noureddin Addis

Osman Bey, the Kurdish chief, is poor. His only remaining valuable is the sword of *Kara Mahmoud*—the first of his line. But *Osman* shrinks from the thought of parting with that.

With the Joker Wild *By W. C. Tuttle*

Magpie and *Ike Harper* have struck it rich at last! But the sudden wealth is too much for *Magpie*. His generous disposition is the cause of some hi-larious doin's on Whispering Creek.

Yancey of the Rangers *By Hugh Pendexter*

Another story of the frontier days in New York, when the Iroquois held the balance of power between the English and the French—and men like *Yancey* risked their lives to keep that balance from turning against the colonists.

MID-MARCH ADVENTURE

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Where Will You Be At 65?

Ralph Young
of Ohio makes $125 a month, just by giving two hours' work each day to his subscription business.

Do you know?—that out of 100 men who are healthy at 25

36 will be dead at **sixty-five**
1 will be rich
4 will be wealthy
5 will be supporting themselves by work
54 will be **dependent** upon friends, relatives or charity.

What are you doing
to keep out of this dependent class?

Harvey Stofflet
of Michigan—$100 a week and lots of time to fish.

Young, Stofflet, Brackett and hundreds of others are making money as representatives of this company. A recent analysis of the earnings of our representatives in several Middle Western States, showed that 40 earned over $25.00, 15 earned over $37.00 a week extra, and 6, using all their time, earned over $50.00.

If you are 65 and in the dependent class, you can get out of it. If you're this side of 65, now is the time to turn your spare time into dollars. Your age doesn't matter. ADVENTURE and EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE offer you an opportunity to make $50.00 a month in your spare time—if you want to give all your time, $50.00 *a week.*

W. E. Brackett
of Ohio frequently adds $50 a month to his income—pay for odd moments.

In 1918 two million people will read ADVENTURE and EVERYBODY'S. A big proportion of this business will come in direct because we do not have a sufficient number of representatives to look after it. You can easily get a part of this business and share in the profits. If you want more money, let us tell you how you can get it. Address

The Ridgway Company
Box 28, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City

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This Man Knows

© *Harris & Ewing*

THE complete story of the supreme tragedy of Belgium is now to be published for the first time.

No man is better fitted for the task than Brand Whitlock, United States Minister to Belgium.

He has been at his post since December, 1913—long enough to see from first-hand observation every move in the tragic game that has made King Albert's little kingdom a martyr among nations.

Brand Whitlock reports only facts that he jotted down in his journal from day to day since the beginning of the war. From them he has written a historic record of absorbing interest and tremendous importance to all Americans.

The manuscript of the biggest story that has come out of the war has come safely through the submarine zone and will be published serially in *Everybody's Magazine.* The first instalment appears in the February issue, out January 23d.

Everybody's

February Number Now on Sale at Your Newsdealer's

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